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Views and Opinions.

"Blasphemy" in Nigeria.

Some time ago we received a letter from Lagos, Nigeria, asking our advice about conducting Free-thought propaganda. We gave what advice we could, and promised any assistance possible at so great a distance, and under conditions that must be very different from those existing in this country. A week ago we received a communication—very much delayed in transmission—which informed us that the work had been commenced and a little journal started, followed by the not unprecedented result of a prosecution. On August 31 the editor of the *Lagos Literary Magazine* was fined £100 or six months' imprisonment. The fine has been paid, but as it is now proposed to form a properly constituted Secular Society, it does not appear that the prosecution will reap any great benefit from their action.

* * *

A Thanksgiving.

The ground of prosecution was an article in the June issue of the magazine entitled "General Thanksgiving." The article would fill about two-thirds of a column of the *Freethinker*, and its nature may be gauged by the following:—

We thank thee, O God, for creating us weak and then blaming and punishing us for being weak and sinful.....We thank thee O God, for allowing War, so that men may slay and maim each other. We thank thee, O God, for allowing hatred to continue in the world, when with one word thou could'st have put an end to all hatred.....We thank thee, O God, for creating smallpox, yellow fever, and epilepsy.....We thank thee, O God, for creating Lunatics and Idiots, so that a portion of thy children may be entertained at the expense of the others.....We thank thee, O God, for creating lions and tigers to devour us.....We thank thee, O God, for creating mosquitoes to pest our lives, and introduce disease into our systems.....We thank thee, O God, for sending Thy Only Son into the world to save it, although nearly 2,000 years after the birth of the Saviour the world is as much

under the influence of sin and wickedness as ever..... We thank thee, O God, for creating Hell for those of thy children whom thou hast made too weak to resist evil.

This is a fair specimen of the article on which the prosecution was based, and the reason for the prosecution, and for the conviction was that it was offensive to certain people. Who these were we shall see in a moment.

* * *

Bigotry in Power.

Section 204 of the Criminal Code for the Colony and Protectorate of Nigeria provides that:—

Any person who does an act which any class of persons consider as a public insult on their religion, with the intention that they should consider the act such an insult, and any person who does an unlawful act with the knowledge that any class of persons will consider it such an insult, is guilty of a misdemeanour, and is liable to imprisonment for two years.

This, then, is the law of blasphemy in Nigeria. Any class of persons who consider a man has insulted their religion may initiate a prosecution; and, despite the expression "any class," one may reasonably suspect the true reading to be "any class of Christians." Christians will be allowed the same licence of speech with regard to others that they are permitted here. In this case the "class of person" on whose behalf the Attorney-General prosecuted were Bishop Herbert Tugwell, of the Church Missionary Society, Rev. A. W. Howells, Rev. T. A. J. Ogunbiyi, C. W. Wakeman, and H. C. Chancellor, all of the C.M.S., with O. J. Griffen, Superintendent of the Wesleyan Missionary Society, and Rev. Father Terien, of the Roman Catholic Mission. The professional interest is naked and unashamed. And the regulation is one which is, in practice, wholly in the interest of Christian missionary religion. It not only reduces blasphemy to a plain absurdity, but it places the freedom of all non-Christians at the mercy of any "class of persons" who feel themselves insulted. That is, unless the non-Christian is content to be a coward and a hypocrite. In that case the Christian will treat him as a brother beloved. It is the normal consequence of all punishments for opinion to place a tax on honesty and a premium upon hypocrisy.

* * *

Getting at the Facts.

Now let us return to the prosecuted article. Roman Catholic, Episcopalian, and Wesleyan Methodist say it is an insult to their religion. Why? Is it untrue that God is responsible for all the evils particularized in the "General Thanksgiving"? If God is not responsible, who is? Surely it is the burden of numerous apologies that God does allow them, either because to prevent them would be an interference with human freedom or because they are part of God's plan of educating the world. Mr. White, the editor of the magazine, was only saying quite plainly what thousands of Christians say with much circumlocution. Bishop Tugwell, for example, is a member of the Church of England, and in the Prayer Book, under the heading "The Visitation

of the Sick," the minister is instructed to say to the sick person:—

Dearly beloved, know this that Almighty God is the Lord of life and death and of all things to them pertaining, as youth, strength, health, age, weakness, and sickness. Wherefore, whatsoever your sickness is, know you certainly that it is God's visitation.

That is clear enough. And it cannot be held that God is certainly the cause of sickness in England but not in Nigeria. And for the other Christians, we may surely refer them to Isaiah:—

Behold the Lord maketh the earth empty, and maketh it waste, and turneth it upside down.

I form the light and create darkness; I make peace, and create evil; I the Lord do all these things.

This, again, is quite clear. God does everything. That is the main teaching of the Bible; it is the general teaching of the best Christian theology. God must have created the mosquito, and the lion, and the tiger, and the germs of disease. They are all part of the plan of creation. Lagos Freethinkers are only putting plainly before Christians the teachings of their creed. We are not surprised they feel aggrieved. That is usual with all shams and hypocrisies when threatened with exposure.

* * *

A Plea for Reason.

One can readily understand that Bishop Tugwell and his fellow-preachers find it much easier to lock the Freethinker up or fine him than it is to answer him. That is the historic way of dealing with the heretic; and in these out-of-the-way places, where the white officials hang more or less together, it is a method easily put into operation. Bishop Tugwell feels himself insulted on being told that his God made the evil things of the world. Well, in God's name—if we may be permitted a pious ejaculation—if he didn't make them, who did? If the germ of smallpox came without his aid or against his will, by whose will or with whose aid did it come? If one thing could exist without God, why not all? And is there not good scriptural warranty for saying that God prepared hell for the Devil and his angels? One can hardly imagine Satan preparing it for himself. Would the Bishop have been better pleased if, instead of thanking God for all the evils in the world, Freethinkers had blamed him? Let us try and cultivate a little logic. If God is, if he is what Christians say he is, the world is as he would have it be. He could have made it otherwise. He preferred it as it is. And if we are to praise him for the good in the world, must we not also blame him for the bad? It is not the fault of the Freethinker that he draws a logical conclusion from the Christian premises. The fault lies with those who propound a creed which is at once an insult to human intelligence and an outrage on human decency.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"Dough."

O! GOD our Help in Ages Past.

(Pile up the Dough).

We all must come to Thee at last.

(Pile up the Dough).

And though Thy Son said other things;

We'll cinch the quids and quit the wings;

An empty pocket misery brings.

(Pile up the Dough).

The Lord, through light, He led the weak.

(Pile up the Dough).

He blessed the poor and praised the meek.

(Pile up the Dough).

And though in Hell with pain you'll stew;

The Bishops know a thing or two

Worth three that Jesus tried to do.

(Pile up the Dough).

A. F. T.

The Essence of Christianity.

As is well known, there is no authoritative definition of the Christian religion, with the result that after an existence of two thousand years scarcely any two among the millions who profess it are agreed as to what it really is and seeks to accomplish. Indeed, it is safe to conclude that existing definitions of it are literally innumerable. This being the case, it naturally follows that there is no agreement as to that in which the real character of Christianity consists, or as to what quality constitutes or marks its true nature. One popular preacher of a generation ago was in the habit of saying that the essence of Christianity is self-denial, and the same opinion is being frequently expressed to-day. Others declare that the predominant Christian quality is love—love to God manifesting itself in social service. Some who hold this view are convinced that "Christianity and war are incompatible, and that Christianity truly lived is the antidote to war." This is tantamount to a confession that the prevailing religion has never justified its existence. The Rev. T. Rhondda Williams, of Brighton, accounts for its failure by saying that the Churches have never realized what its central message is, and that, consequently, the pulpit has neglected to give it the prominence which it demands. The truth is, however, that social service is not a distinctively Christian duty, but has been enjoined by all the great religions of the world. Others still assure us that the essence of Christianity is "the saving of man in spite of Humanity by One whose life transcended the limits of his birth and nation." Such is the opinion held by Professor J. M. Thompson, of Oxford, to which he commits himself (in the *Christian Commonwealth* for October 24) and we are bound to admit that there is more truth in it than in any of the other views. Neither self-denial nor vicarious service has ever been exemplified on any large scale by the followers of Christ, except under priestly tyranny, and ministers of the Gospel have more than once, even in the twentieth century, dissociated themselves from mere social reformers, and expressed their pride at being preachers of the Gospel of personal salvation by a mystic union with a crucified and risen Saviour. And, surely, they are right, if the Pauline Epistles and the Creeds are to be relied upon. Paul's one message was that now at length God is in Christ reconciling the world unto himself, and the Nicene Creed speaks of Jesus Christ as "the Son of God, begotten of the Father before all worlds, the only begotten, Light of Light, very God of very God,"

Who for us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven, and was incarnate by the Holy Ghost of the Virgin Mary, and was made man, he was crucified for us under Pontius Pilate, and suffered and was buried. And the third day he rose again according to the Scriptures, and ascended into heaven.

With that teaching all subsequent creeds are in full harmony, so that we are perfectly right in affirming that the essence of Christianity is justification by faith through the merits of the crucified Redeemer.

Christianity presupposes human depravity or lostness. Behind all other ideas in it is that of man's total inability to save himself, and of God in Christ's gracious intervention on his behalf. In his timely article on this subject in the *R. P. A. Annual* for 1918, Professor Gilbert Murray says:—

It seems to me that the greatest source of the religious emotion is exactly this feeling of "lostness," this feeling that a man "cannot live without Christ." I doubt if a man engaged in full successful activity, satisfying all his social instincts, ever discovers God or the need of God, though, of course, he may continue to use

the "discovery" when once made. It is when the social approval, the sympathy, the human friendship which we normally enjoy, and without which we feel desolate, is taken away that we crave so suddenly for a Friend who will never fail us, and whose support will make up for the world's opposition.

Nothing is more undeniable than the fact that the first duty of the Christian pulpit is to create this sense of lostness and need of a Saviour in all who listen to its voice. Without the doctrine of the Fall there would have been no use for the Christian dogma of the Atonement. Until a man is brought to a realization of his lost condition as a child of Adam, he will never dream of accepting Christ as his deliverer. Some years ago the Rev. Silas Hocking, in a speech at the City Temple, threw vitriolic ridicule on the people who concentrated their attention on the Salvation of their own "miserable souls"; but the audience showed its total disapproval of his action in the most emphatic manner at its disposal, and, without a doubt, the attitude displayed by the distinguished novelist was anti-Christian to the last degree. According to the New Testament and the Orthodox Church, we are all doomed to perish for ever in hell-fire, and our only hope of escape is by putting our trust in the finished work of Christ. And there are facts in the lives of the generality of people which the preacher utilizes in his attempt to bring home to us our need of a Divine Friend that sticketh closer than a brother. As the Professor puts it:—

Most of us have in our lives periods of desolation or exile, when the world seems to have betrayed us and we crave for some social support—some sympathy or agreement or affection—which is not forthcoming. In the space where we can see clearly, there is no one; but beyond that there is a space that is dim and hidden, and beyond that again the vastness of the invisible; and if in the very great distance we begin to feel that there is a Friend, a Friend very powerful, full of intimate understanding, absolutely faithful, and unlike all the friends who have failed us; a Friend with hardly any distinctive characteristics except those which will satisfy our own hungry desire; how can we escape the suspicion that the very existence of the Friend, and not merely the details of his character, is only the creation and projection of that Desire?

Professor Murray is a fine poet as well as a keen critic. What he discerns with absolute clearness is that there are real human wants which Christianity pretends to be able to supply to our entire satisfaction, and that to multitudes who attend church or chapel the supply is all that could be desired. Clergymen are aware, however, how extremely difficult it often is to convince anxious inquirers that the Gospel story is true; that there is a God who truly loves and cares for them; that Christ died for them and is longing to befriend them; or that there is a Spirit of all grace who longs to accompany them through life. Painfully small, at best, is their success in such a mission. The number of people who verily believe that there is "a Friend behind phenomena" who never fails, is never large, and even they pass through times of doubt and fear. Even they must confess, with Tennyson, that—

We have but faith; we cannot know.

Every supernatural religion is fundamentally the same. There is no material difference between Christianity and Mithraism. The Saviour God, who dies and comes to life again, is common to most religions. Osiris, Adonis, Attis, Mithra, and Christ are all in the same category. Man's ignorance of Nature has always bred within him the desire to escape from her. This is how Meredith expresses it:—

Therefore the wretch inclines
Afresh to the Invisible, who, he saith,
Can raise him high: with vows of living faith
For little signs.

Some signs he must demand,
Some proofs of slaughtered nature; some prized few,
To satisfy the senses it is true,
And in his hand.

This miracle which saves
Himself, himself doth from extinction clutch,
By virtue of his worth, contrasting much
With brutes and knaves,

From dust, of him abhorred,
He would be snatched by Grace discovering worth,
"Sever me from the hollowness of Earth!
Me take, dear Lord!"

But escape from Nature is utterly impossible. She is our only real Friend, and that "Friend behind phenomena" is nothing but a myth. Professor Murray says:—

As long as the discussion of Christianity is concerned mainly with the question of its "truth" or "falsehood," I confess that the orthodox position seems to me as completely remote from the possibility of defence as that of any other traditional religion. Neither the doctrines stated in the creeds nor the supposed history contained in the Gospels will, in my judgment, bear examination.

Thus, even in its very essence, Christianity is a system of incredible myths, which fully accounts for its moral impotence, and justifies the rising generation for its attitude of indifference towards it. Dr. Orchard admitted, in a recent interview, that there is no sign whatever of any revival of interest in it, and that the outlook for the Churches is extremely gloomy.

J. T. LLOYD.

In the Name of the Prophet.

Who shall persuade the kings that God is not,
The politicians, usurers, financiers,
Priests, warriors, that depend on God to bear
The burden of their inhumanities?—*John Davidson.*

THE clergy assert constantly that England is a Christian country, but the fact remains that the British Empire contains more non-Christian inhabitants than Christian. Prominent among the great religions incorporated within the Empire is Mohammedanism, which, under the Moorish banner, once threatened to overrun Europe. Had not the defeat of Islam resulted, a large part of the world might have become Mohammedan; or, as Edward Gibbon tersely declared, Oxford University might to-day be expounding the Koran.

Yet the Koran, the Bible of the Mohammedans, revered by over two hundred and thirty millions, of whom eighty millions are British subjects, is a little known book in Christian countries. It is a wonderful volume, and, if the arguments by which the divine inspiration of the Christian Bible are worth a straw, this must be inspired also. There is the same apparent incompatibility of the author with the writing: a morality as impressive, the same beauty of language and wealth of Oriental imagery; the same claim to prophecy and fulfilment of prophecy.

The outstanding divergence is that there is no claim on the part of the prophet to work miracles, although the Koran is based manifestly on Jewish legends. The same fictitious characters, Noah, Abraham, Lot, Moses, Solomon, and others, appear again and again. The conception of duty is simplicity itself compared with the tangle of the Christian Trinity. Take the first Sura: "Glory to God, Master of the Universe, the Merciful, the Compassionate, Lord of the Day of Judgment, we adore Thee and implore Thy aid; guide us in the right

path." Then, again: "There is no God, but God; God is most great," was a bold message for an Arabian shepherd to bring to a nation that had gods by the dozen, and sharp swords to defend them.

Take the faith as laid down in the Second Sura: "Piety does not consist in turning your faces to the East or the West. He is pious who believes in God, and in the prophets; who, for the love of God, gives of his own to his neighbour; to the orphans, to the poor, to the traveller, and to those who ask; who ransoms the captives, who observes prayer, who gives alms, fulfils the engagements he contracts, who is patient in adversity, in hard times, and times of violence. These are just and fear the Lord."

Chivalry originated in the courts of the Emirs. The knight and the troubadour came from Islam. Together they resummoned civilization, which had gone out in darkness at the break-up of the Roman Empire. The world at the time was divided. Long since Europe and Asia had gone their separate ways. When they caught sight of each other, the Christian Church sickened with envy and bigotry. There ensued the eight Crusades in which the Papacy pitted Christianity against Mohammedanism, and staked the authenticity of each in the result. The result was that Mohammedanism proved its claim. The Koran was the Bible of the people who, when the Saxons were living in rude huts, had developed a poetic civilization, a social order which had a superstructure of art and of science. It was this that hundreds of thousands of Christians in rusty mail went forth to destroy. But though they could not crush Islam, the chivalry of the Moslems taught them how to conquer themselves. From the victory contemporaneous civilization proceeds.

The conduct of the great Saladin, the Moslem ruler, illustrates the chivalry of the race. When the Crusaders captured Jerusalem, they turned it into a shambles; but when Saladin recaptured it he did not shed civilian blood. On the contrary, he spent large sums of money in alleviating distress. At his death he ordered gifts to be distributed to the poor, without distinction of creed, a noble act in that age. "Take this cloak," he said to one of his servants, "show it to the faithful and tell them that the Ruler of the East could take but one garment into the grave."

The place filled by the founder of Mohammedanism is very prominent. As compared with some other religious systems, Islam possesses great advantages. The text of the Koran was finally settled within thirty years of Mohammed's death, and, so far as his own life is concerned, eulogists and detractors are agreed as to main facts of his career, however their judgment of it may differ. The career of Mohammed may be traced in the stately pages of Gibbon, the picturesque phrases of Carlyle, and in many another volume. An ardent propagandist, the prophet made only thirteen converts in three years. In most communities such propaganda meant death or severe punishment. The execution of Socrates took place after a legal trial in a highly civilized state of antiquity. The charge was that Socrates did not worship the gods and shook other people's belief in them. In the nineteenth century Joseph Smith, the founder of Mormonism, met his death in a Republican country at the hands of the State soldiery. The reason why Mohammed escaped death was that there was no orderly government. When forced to take the sword in hand, it took him ten years' fighting before he prevailed. The motto on his banner was "God is Great," a motto which has challenged the Trinitarian Christian world for centuries.

Mohammed was a very remarkable man, and his religious system is still a powerful factor in life. Whilst

the number of Mohammedans show a tendency to decrease in Europe, and to increase with the growth of population in Asia; in Africa, Islam is being steadily propagated among the tribes, and is increasing constantly. Mohammed's life story is a plain tale. When he first meets us he is in middle life. Several of his relations play an important part in his career. We know the name of his first wife, Kadajah, said to have been fifteen years his senior, yet the mother of a family. The daughters were all married to men of note. He seems, like most of the Meccans, to have carried on a trade; at first accompanying caravans, afterwards selling goods. We even know the name of his business partner. Passionate and well-meaning, he never forgot a benefit. In his age, Ayesha, his young favourite wife, a woman who distinguished herself by all manner of qualities, questioned him concerning Kadajah, his first wife. "Now, am not I better than Kadajah? She was a widow, old, and had lost her looks. You love me better than you did her?" "No! by Allah!" answered Mohammed, "she believed in me when none else would. In the whole world I had but one friend, and she was that."

Yet, after the death of Mohammed, the doom of Islam was sounded. It seems strange that this should be so, for hundreds of cities shimmered with mosques. From thousands of filagree pulpits the glory of Allah and of Mohammed his Prophet were daily proclaimed. And Moslems possess a good share of the simple virtues. They are said to be temperate, truthful, honest, and hospitable. Yet, as a ruling power, they become a curse to all who fall under their power. They have been trained up under despotism and superstition, and they are capable of the wildest fanaticism. They are proud of their deficiencies, and have an obstinacy in their natures which flames into something worse in the face of opposition.

Islam has a noble and ancient history; but no people can live on its past. She has given to the world one of the immortal books in *The Arabian Nights*. She has incarnated dreams in architectural marble. Her poets penned manuscripts which throughout the ages retain the perfume of scented gardens. For a long period she was truly powerful in the world, and now she is at the foot of the ladder of progress.

What is the reason of this terrible downfall? The answer is simple. She is the victim of stereotyped religion. To the Moslem, religion is not an amusement, or a social decoration, or a social police force. It is a passion that inflames his nature, and makes all other things trivial. Christianity is open to much of these objections; only there is less religion in it. It is only better as a mild attack of fever is better than a severe attack of fever. Most Christians have the disease at recurring periods, coming on once a week. The followers of Mohammed were more fanatical than the Prophet. The Caliph Omar wished to burn all books except the Koran, which he regarded as the beginning and end of wisdom. This spirit has destroyed the value of Islamism. During the past five centuries Moslems have done nothing for human advancement. They have not made a single contribution to art, literature, science, manufacture, or invention; they have not produced an engineer, or a chemist, or a biologist, or an historian, or a painter, or a musician of the first rank. Its doom is said.

Throughout the civilized world the shadow of death has fallen. The fair fields of Europe are covered with corpses, and the flower of the manhood of many nations is arrayed for slaughter. A world-epoch is dying. While gravediggers are at work at their grim task, a fresh page of history is being turned. On the other side was a dawn which will presently be daylight. The knell of

expiring night Nature answers with words of hope. Into a shroud she tosses flowers. Of these many are frail, but one is the white flower of Liberty. It symbolizes the eternal quest of mankind which will one day make all things new, and will change the face of the earth. In that day superstitions will be transformed into the religion of Humanity, and both Christianity and Islamism will be as remote as when the star of Ormuzd burned out in the unquiet skies.

MIMNERMUS.

The Bible and Immortality.

THE OLD TESTAMENT.

ONE of the many superstitions which the Christian religion has borrowed from a remote and ignorant past is the belief that something within man, variously designated mind, soul, or spirit, is capable of existing apart from and independent of the body to which it belongs. Hence, what is usually spoken of as "death" is declared to be only the separation of the "spiritual" part of man from the material portion—the former being an invisible entity that survives death and continues to exist in some unknown locality, and the latter ultimately crumbling into dust. Of the correctness of the last statement there can be no doubt; the only point open to question is the existence of an internal spiritual entity that survives the death of the body. Much inflated nonsense has been written upon the "pro" side of the question, in which reason has been thrown to the winds and well-known facts ignored. It may not, then, be out of place to see if any real evidence can be produced, either for or against, of sufficient weight to be submitted to the Court of Common Sense, whose verdict is the only one of value to-day.

Before entering upon the subject generally, it will be well to see what the Bible has to say respecting immortality. In that ancient volume we find the ideas that were prevalent in two periods of the world's history, with an interval between them of several hundred years. We turn first, then, to the books of the earlier period, those of the Old Testament, written originally in Hebrew, but afterwards translated into Greek some time before the Christian era. It was this Greek translation, usually called the Septuagint, which was used by the New Testament writers, as well as by the historian Josephus. In our search for evidence of immortality in the Old Testament, we have no less than thirty-nine books to examine; but this work can be very much curtailed by the aid of a concordance.

Writing in an old religious publication, Professor Sayce says of the ancient Egyptians:—

Educated and uneducated alike, all believed after a fashion in the resurrection of the body, the immortality of the soul, a judgment to come, and a heaven and hell. It was in connection with the belief in the resurrection of the body that embalming was practised. But Egyptian superstitions never attracted the Hebrews.

Just so; the Hebrews took all their superstitions from the Assyrians and Phœnicians, who were of the same Semitic race and spoke nearly the same dialect. The Egyptians carried on their embalming during the whole period of Old Testament times in which Israel was a nation, so that the Hebrews must have known of the practice, though they never adopted it. One reason for their not doing so is, that at no period in Old Testament times did the Israelites believe in the resurrection of the body or in a future life. This conclusion is the only one that results from an examination of the thirty-nine books. Nowhere in the pages of the sacred volume, if we search from Genesis to Malachi, do we find it stated

that man is an immortal being who would after death "inherit eternal life."

In the story of the "Fall" we are told that Adam was expelled from Eden lest he should "eat of the tree of life and live for ever." He was not immortal then, neither was he told that he possessed a soul that would live in another life; not one word was said upon this subject. Similarly, the Lord God, in his dealings with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, whom he had taken under his special protection, several times pronounced blessings upon all three; but these had solely to do with their earthly lives. They were to enjoy peace, prosperity, and have a numerous progeny, and after spending a happy time on earth, "be buried in a good old age" (Gen. xv. 15; xviii. 8; xxii. 17; etc.); but nothing was said about such an important matter as life after death—not even to Abraham, whom the Lord called his "friend" (Isaiah xli. 8). The Lord God gave to his three faithful servants every earthly blessing known to him, but he had apparently never thought of "eternal life."

Again, where one would naturally expect to find some mention of immortality, there, as elsewhere, the promise is conspicuous by its absence. In four of the books forming the Pentateuch there are scores of long paragraphs giving instructions to the Israelites through Moses respecting the priests, Levites, sacrifices, the tabernacle, dress and furniture, penalties for various offences, and a host of other matters; but in the whole of the Mosaic law there is not one word respecting a future life. It is thus clearly evident that the Lord God had never thought of giving man such a life.

Furthermore, that the Hebrew deity had no "eternal life" in store for his chosen people is fully proved by the twenty-eighth chapter of Deuteronomy, in which is set forth at length all the "blessings" that would be showered upon them if they remained faithful in their allegiance and continued to worship him (Deut. xxviii. 1-14). These blessings are followed by a long string of the most terrible "curses" that were to come upon all those who forsook him for other gods (Deut. xxviii. 15-68). Every one of these blessings and curses had reference only to their earthly life; there was no heaven, nor no hell; no rewards nor punishments in a future life; there was nothing beyond this world. If the fourteen verses describing the blessings be read, it will immediately be perceived that the Hebrew God knew nothing of any other life than the present; another life after death had evidently never once entered his mind. After carefully reading these verses, it is simply impossible to imagine that a God who had decided to bestow "eternal life" on all who served and obeyed him could intentionally withhold all mention of that future life here.

The same may be said of the Decalogue (Exod. xx.; Deut. v.), in which the only incentive to good conduct is the promise "that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee." In 2 Kings ii. 11 it is recorded that the prophet Elijah "went up by a whirlwind into heaven." Assuming the story to be true, this reward was granted as a special favour; but the fact that he went to heaven without dying tacitly implies that there was no life after death.

It may, of course, be contended that an argument based upon silence cannot be valid; that because a future life is nowhere mentioned, that is no reason for supposing that it had not been promised to the nation by the local deity, or that the people themselves did not look forward to it. Such might, perhaps, be the case with regard to some minor question, but it could not possibly be so with respect to such an important matter as a life after death. Such an omission would be like a play of *Hamlet* without the ghost. If "eternal life" had really

been promised, then there must have been a "conspiracy of silence" on the part of all the writers of the thirty-nine books—which, as Euclid says, "is absurd."

There is, however, one paragraph in the Old Testament which should perhaps be noticed. This is the story of the "Witch of Endor." Here, it is often asserted, is a conclusive proof of the immortality of the soul. In our Bibles this woman is stated to have possessed "a familiar spirit"; in the Greek Septuagint she is said to have had "a divining spirit"—the latter being evidently the more correct. This paragraph reads:—

1 Sam. xxviii. 8-20.—Saul said to the woman, Divine unto me, I pray thee, by the familiar spirit, and bring one up whomsoever I shall name.....Then said the woman, Whom shall I bring up unto thee? And he said, Bring me up Samuel. And when the woman saw Samuel, she cried with a loud voice.....And the king said unto her, Be not afraid: *what seest thou?* And the woman said, I see a god coming up out of the earth. And he said unto her, What form is he of? And she said, An old man cometh up; and he is covered with a robe [or mantle]. And Saul perceived that it was Samuel.....And Samuel said to Saul, Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up? etc.

According to this story, king Saul saw nothing; he had to ask the woman what *she* saw. The narrative thus reminds one of a scene at a modern Spiritualistic meeting, in which a lady or gentleman professing to be a "clairvoyant" declares from the platform that he or she sees a "spirit" standing behind one of the persons present, and then, after naming the sex, goes on to describe the apparent age, form, and dress of the alleged apparition. As in the case of Saul, no one among the spectators are able to see the "spirit." The Bible story, if true, proves nothing more than the existence of a number of sharp-witted individuals among the ancient Jewish people, who traded on the ignorance and credulity of the majority. The only point in the story demanding explanation is, Who did the talking (which is here omitted) ascribed to the spirit of Samuel? Assuming the presence of a "spirit" at the *seance*, that abnormal being was invisible and without vocal organs, its body being in the grave. If, then, any words were spoken, it was the woman who uttered them, and, in doing so, she might probably counterfeit the quavering voice of an old man. Among Spiritualists it is, I believe, generally assumed that a "spirit," whenever it speaks at all, does so by employing the vocal organs of the medium. The two cases are thus very nearly parallel. There is, however, one point in this story that I will have to refer to again.

That the Endor *seance* is a Hebrew fiction appears evident from the fact that the words supposed to be uttered by the spirit of Samuel are precisely the same as those uttered on a previous occasion by the living Samuel when reproving king Saul in the name of Yahweh (1 Sam. xv. 17-23). Now, the words spoken by the living Samuel were known only to himself and king Saul; consequently the woman could not have repeated them at the *seance*. That a spirit-Samuel, without brain or vocal organs, could have uttered them cannot for a moment be admitted. We are thus thrown back upon the compiler of the book, who *did* know of Samuel rebuking Saul in 1 Sam. xv.; for he had written that incident himself—and he probably fabricated it, as he certainly did the story of the *seance*. All through the book the compiler has glorified the acts of David and disparaged those of Saul, though the latter was one of the best kings that reigned over Israel, and a better man than David.

Having now seen that no promise of "eternal life" is found in the Old Testament, it is not surprising to be told by Christian commentators that immortality is

plainly implied in various passages of that volume in which life, soul, or spirit is mentioned. This remains to be verified.

ABRACADABRA.

Correspondence.

AGNOSTICISM AGAIN.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Every Freethinker admires the life-work and reveres the memory of Charles Bradlaugh, but I confess that up till now I must have underrated his prowess.

According to Mr. H. Irving, in "Sugar Plums" last week, Bradlaugh appears to have been able to "combat every conception of the Inconceivable." That, truly, must have been a most magnificent *tour de force*—if it ever occurred! I have my doubts. Will Mr. Irving set them at rest by giving me, not "every," but just one single "conception of the Inconceivable?" If he succeeds, I assure him, I will at once proclaim myself an Atheist, and exhaust all my thought in combating anything so monstrously self-contradictory. Until then, "God," pure or applied, must mean nothing to me; and I must continue to call myself an Agnostic, for, really, my "scorn for lexicographers" is not yet sufficiently developed to reconcile me to a name derived from a word which my philosophy tells me is meaningless.

But this stiff-necked attitude, I am sure, is temporary only, for if your editorial patience be not exhausted, and Mr. Irving be willing to oblige me, I hope soon to see in the pages of the *Freethinker* the remarkable phenomenon of a man conceiving the inconceivable.

J. BLAIR WILLIAMS.

[In justice to our correspondent, it should be pointed out that "inconceivable" was writ "sarcastic."—ED.]

The Blank Wall.

I.

THE stupidity of the modern mind, and more especially of the modern official mind, is well demonstrated by the amazing lack of even elementary psychological knowledge displayed during the progress of this War.

Here, it must or should be obvious to all, we have a flood-tide of barbarism involving both body and mind, which has swept men like an avalanche swiftly away from their homes, wives, children, and peaceful civilian life; all the refining influences of normal human existence have been destroyed in the deluge of war; men have been forcibly dislodged from groves of ordinary civil toil; they have been sucked without mercy into the ravenous maw of an enormous military machine whose sole function is to emphasize their purely animal and primitive propensities. They have been drilled, lectured, trained, and "educated" in the "art of war," that is, in the science of legalized slaughter; prizes in the shape of medals, etc., have been, and still are, offered to those men who are most successful in the business of war. Yet, despite the psychological re-actions inevitable in such a process of organized demoralization, there are a host of terrified official persons raising up their beautiful white hands in horror, not because of war or its natural violation of ideals, but because there seems to be an increase in crime and disorderly conduct at home; or an increase in beer-drinking; or an increase in lust and in animal recreations generally!

During the now almost universal and popular "Picture Paper" ideal of war and the right to kill, men are to remain respectable, law-abiding citizens; models of good behaviour, and, at all times, worthy of the good-conduct medal!

ARTHUR F. THORN.

"The Church of to-morrow is not to be built up of prodigal sons," said the Rev. L. Beaumont at the Congregational Conference. It is far more likely to be "built" of daughters who have taken the wrong turning.

Acid Drops.

The disaster to the raiding Zeppelin fleet has given the ultra pious an opportunity. A Mr. Noel Friston led off with a letter to the *Star*, asking for general thanksgiving because "God blew with his winds, and they were scattered." Quite a number of other letters followed, calling upon the churches and chapels to appoint a day on which to thank God for his help. But there has been, as is not unusual, a striking paucity of letters on the other side. We have good reason for knowing that this was not because letters were unsent. One *Freethinker* reader pertinently asked, in a letter to the *Star*, "If God was responsible for the wind, I cannot imagine why it was not sent before many women and children were mutilated and killed? A *Te Deum* might have been excusable had this terrible War been avoided, not when it has been in progress over three years."

That seems to go to the root of the matter, and, presumably, the letter was *not* printed because it went straight to the point. Imagine thanking God for dispersing the Zeppelins *after* he had permitted them to kill seven children in one family, in addition to many others! And what of the Zeppelins which came and killed, and escaped unscathed? And of the various aeroplane raids? If God can scatter the one, why not the other? And what are we to think of a God who can only do something after the mischief has been accomplished? The crowning irony is that God permitted the Zepps to kill in Christian England and brought them down in Freethought France! All these newspaper pietists succeed in doing is to make God as ridiculous as themselves. If a man really believed that God could and did disperse the Zeppelins, it would be far more manly to "curse God and die" than to live and praise such culpable negligence or gross brutality.

The Bishop of Woolwich is resigning after Christmas. He thinks Woolwich requires a younger man, with more energy than he possesses, to deal with the new problems that exist. We suppose this is a diplomatic way of saying that all is not well with the Church in Woolwich. We know Freethinkers are active in Woolwich, and their efforts are bound to have some effect. We suggest to them the need for organization. Isolated effort is bound to involve a deal of wasted energy.

On Friday, October 26, Mr. Lloyd George entertained at breakfast about thirty ministers of all denominations. We may take it for granted that Mr. Lloyd George would not have done this unless he had wanted the clergy to do something for the Government. And we may be equally sure that the clergy will not do it unless they get something in return. So we shall await developments with some little interest.

An evening paper says, "Every piece of bread saved brings us an hour nearer complete victory." Perhaps the 50,000 clergymen in this country, who are too proud to fight, will help matters by suspending communion services.

With the fear of Disestablishment in their hearts, pious penmen are writing of "The Awakening of the Welsh Church." Quite poetic. The trump of doom ought to wake the dead.

Writing in the *Sunday Pictorial*, Mr. Horatio Bottomley says that "the simple French peasantry are keeping their faith, humbly believing in the undestroyed Madonna and in the indestructible Child." This is really very thin, even for the readers of a Sunday paper with a large circulation. "Simple peasantry" everywhere are very liable to "keep their faith." They have very little else to keep.

Brother Bottomley is one of the toughest converts that Christians have ever had. Christ said: "Love your enemies," but Brother Horatio shouts: "Give them Hell, now!" And there can be no question that the latest convert is far more popular than the founder of Christianity. This gives point to the Gallic jest that Christ was the first and last Christian.

The Bible says that the Lord slumbereth not nor sleepeth. Even if he had any inclination that way, the Christians would not grant him a moment's indulgence. Just now they are committing assault and battery on his holy ears. The Americans have held a "national day" of prayer for success in this War. This has meant a great outpouring of talk; but all the other Christian Churches are also bombarding "the Throne of Grace." Every humane person will ejaculate, "Pity the sorrows of a poor old Deity!"

Journalists are often very inaccurate. The *Nonconformist Daily News* recently referred to Richard Baxter, the dissenting divine, as the author of *The Saint's Rest*. Baxter wrote a famous work, entitled *The Saint's Everlasting Rest*, and he also wrote a number of tracts, one of which was entitled *A Shove for A Short A — d Christian*. The *Daily News* scribe is, in all probability, unacquainted with either.

The refusal of the House of Commons to sanction the proposal of the Government to pay a royalty to the ground landlords on all petroleum found on their land has brought to the front the question of mining royalties in general. While this is before the public, we hope the question of the mining royalties enjoyed by the Church of England will be remembered. From Durham alone the royalties amount to between two and three hundred thousand annually.

The action of the Convocation of Canterbury in deleting some barbaric portions of the Bible from the Prayer Book has aroused the ire of some of their fellow Christians. The Council of the Church Association has passed a resolution regretting "the public slight put upon certain of the Psalms by the recent high-handed action of Convocation." The resolution concludes that such Psalms express a "righteous vengeance upon the working of evil." The best comment upon this precious resolution is to take a typical instance from the Psalms, such as "Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones." There is a great deal of "frightfulness" in the Holy Book, as well as much Oriental nastiness.

The Bishop of Chelmsford is in the doleful dumps. In his address to the Diocesan Conference he had very little of an encouraging character to say. He charged the newspapers with general unfairness to the clergy in their relation to the War, and he could cherish no hope of any improvement until the editors got born again. "Until newspapers are controlled by regenerate editors," he said, "the Church, and especially her clergy, must expect to be misrepresented." Editors ought to be profoundly thankful that there is a Lord Bishop who knows exactly what is wrong with them, and what they must do in order to be set right.

But the Church herself, as well as newspaper editors stands in need of regeneration. The Bishop pointed out "that to allow the present state of affairs in the Church to continue was to head straight for disestablishment." Disestablishment would be a fearful calamity for both Church and State; but even that would be infinitely better than a continuation of existing conditions. So the Bishop's motto is "Church Reform or Disestablishment." As a matter of fact, the State has grown almost hopelessly degenerate, and is now seriously considering whether concubinage should not be adopted as a legal substitute for marriage. His lordship's demand is this: "If you, the State, won't grant us self-government in conformity to the laws of God, then disestablish and disendow us as quickly as you can."

The Bishop of London's public utterances aid the gaiety of life. Recently he said: "Many people are doing very little to win the War." Was he thinking of the thousands of clergy who are exempted from military service?

The clergy are notorious for their reckless statements. One much in favour is the libel concerning the heavy increase of drinking among women. At the Stratford Police

Court, near which there is a population of over half a million, the presiding magistrate said: "People who did not know what they were talking of were complaining of heavy drinking amongst women, but it was an absolute libel on the district."

"The educated woman is becoming more and more the backbone of civil life," says the Bishop of London. In the ages of faith the dear clergy moderately regarded woman as a mere sub.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says that "Christianity must change or perish. It had delayed the change overlong, until the Churches were half empty, women its chief supporters, and both the learned classes and the poorest were largely alienated from it." The parsons will be delighted at this unsolicited testimonial.

The War Office has declined the offer of the Bishop of London to raise a Parsons' Ambulance Corps, on the ground that it "would be most difficult to work and maintain, and experience showed that it was doubtful whether, if established, it would last." This is a fine example of the snub courteous.

At Prescott, near Liverpool, there lives a family named Duddle. Mr. Duddle and his wife quarrelled, and the husband turned her out of the house at the point of a poker. Mrs. Duddle then summoned her husband for desertion, and, in adjourning the case, the chairman said the Bench would ask Mr. Case, the court missionary, to report. And Mr. Case, the dear good man, said that in his opinion one of the parties—we do not know which as the report is somewhat mixed—was "totally unfit" to have charge of children, as he, or she, did not believe in a hell. What a nice man Mr. Case must be! For our part we should hesitate to give Mr. Case control of a dissipated tom cat.

The Church has been described as a sleepy institution, but a London daily paper recently expressed the sentiment in felicitous language. It stated that the Rev. W. Summers, of Dane Hill, Sussex, "has passed away in his sleep. Deceased who was in his eighty-fifth year, had always expressed a wish to die in harness."

The dear and dull *Daily News* never forgets to cater for its Nonconformist readers. A short time since it published a couple of paragraphs entitled "Ezekiel on War Bread," and referred to the verses as a "Biblical precedent" of present-day conditions. What nonsense is this? Ezekiel's "cookery" would be sufficient to make the bronze lions in Trafalgar Square roar defiance.

It is curious how many minor writers and journalists are dropping into a theological vocabulary. Here is Mr. James Douglas, who is old enough to know better, describing a tenth-rate foreign poet as "the devil, the very devil." So many pious folk bestow that title on the religious maniac who occupies the throne of Germany.

Apparently, some of the Y.M.C.A. huts are not entirely given over to refreshment catering, billiards, and entertainments. A newspaper paragraph announces that a Royal Princess attends the religious services at one of the huts, and takes charge of the music. A princess at the piano should be quite a star attraction.

How hysterical some of the clergy are! The Rev. R. J. Campbell says that the present is "an age of Agnosticism in theory, and Materialism in practice." Is that the reason he left the Nonconformists and joined the ranks of the Government religion?

We were pleased to see Earl Russell calling attention, in a letter to the *Daily News*, to the distinction between Conscientious Objectors who are religious and those who are not, as drawn by the Bishop of Exeter. The Bishop argued for respect and consideration in the one case and harsh treatment in the other. As Earl Russell says, few have

exposed the intolerance of the Church so openly as this Bishop. What we now desire to point out is that this attitude is much more common than Earl Russell imagines. It has been the usual attitude of most members of Tribunals. Many of the ignoramuses have said plainly that an objection that was not based on religious grounds could not be a conscientious one. Conscientiousness and religion were to them synonymous terms, even while they were demonstrating their own weakness in the possession of the former quality.

The *Harrogate Advertiser* gives an account of a most remarkable clergyman. The Rev. J. Chalmer Lyons, of a local Presbyterian church, is in the habit of giving ventriloquial entertainments. He gave a performance before a soldiers' camp, and greatly interested an Atheist soldier. This same Atheist soldier was so taken up with the entertainment that he came again and again, and "this led to his conversion by Mr. Lyons." There is excellent authority for this story—namely, Mr. Lyon himself. All the same, we should dearly like to know the name of this converted Atheist. And why will converted Atheists always conceal their names? But Mr. Lyon is evidently a remarkable man, and so truthful.

There was no need for the *Daily News* to begin it, but having begun it, it should have ended it. The writer of the "Daily Notes" on the leader page gave the other day what it called a Bible precedent for War bread. It quoted Ezekiel iv., verse 9-12: "Take thou also unto thee wheat, and barley, and beans, and lentils, and millet, and fitches, and put them in a vessel, and make thee bread thereof.....And thou shalt eat thereof." At this point the dear *D. N.* breaks off, right in the middle of the twelfth verse. It left out the instructions as to what the mixture was to be baked with. The crowning ingredient was evidently too much for the stomach of our pious contemporary.

The *Sunday Herald* says that "the heads of the Catholic Church in England can be trusted to look after themselves." The same remark may be applied to the clergy of all the Churches.

A new book bears the title, *The Great Unmarried*. Happy thought! Perhaps it refers to the Bishop of London.

The Rev. R. J. Campbell says: "Psychical research is not a substitute for religion, and neither is spiritualism." The 50,000 clergy in this country need have no fear of unemployment at present.

The Russian Executive has decided to dispense with the assistance of the clergy in the government of the country. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why the English Tory press is dissembling its love for the Russian Revolution.

The newspapers state that leaflets are being circulated in the German trenches advocating the advantages of polygamy. It is really wonderful how these German "Atheists" derive their ideas from the Bible.

Sir Arthur Yapp, director of food economy, says, "I want the Churches to lend a hand." Does this imply fewer tea-fights, or communion services without bread and wine?

The Bishop of London poses as an admirable Crichton, and, although a bachelor, often advises married folk as to their duties. One of the latest examples of episcopal wisdom was, "Beef steak and gin are not the best things for children three months old." Does his lordship realize that there is a war? At the present prices of these luxuries, only wealthy persons could so indulge their offspring,

Dr. Horton has published his *Autobiography*, but he omits a good story of him once popular at Oxford University. He once said in a sermon: "I wear no clothes to distinguish myself from my Christian brethren." This resulted in a local caricature representing the reverend doctor in the pulpit wearing nothing except a white tie and black gloves.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

November 4, Abertillery; November 18, Birmingham; November 25, Nuneaton. December, 2, South Shields.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 18, Manchester; November 11, Glasgow; November 12, Falkirk.
- F. H. BLAKEY.—You appear to be doing all that lies within your power to help the Cause, and no one can do more. See "Acid Drops."
- C. W. MARSHALL.—Many thanks. The citations are extremely interesting and useful. Your interest in the *Freethinker* is very encouraging, and we think we are doing the best thing in keeping it unchanged as long as possible, however hard the struggle.
- T. DOBSON.—We are proud to have the good opinion of so old a Freethinker as yourself. We feel quite sure that your steady devotion to the Cause has influenced many others in the right direction.
- ROGERS GEORGE.—"My host has the look of a good sportsman" is a very near rendering of the passage sent.
- J. H. LANGFORD.—Glad you think the Manchester meetings were full of good promise for the future. We think so, too.
- J. W. WHITE.—We shall not fail to take advantage of your suggestion when we are in that neighbourhood. In most places propagandist movements have their ups and downs, but one need not get discouraged over that.
- F. BARRACLOUGH.—We presume your idea is that the very absurdity of a "National Day of Prayer" would help to drive many into Freethought. In that we agree.
- E. H. OLD (Dunedin).—Mr. Cohen has not had a portrait taken for very many years, and we regret that he has not one he could send. We are afraid yours is not the only place in which religious influences control the press.
- A. SPENCER.—Will try and find room as soon as possible.
- F. CHADWICK.—Sorry want of space prevents our publishing your communication.
- W. WHILEHAVEN.—When the Curate of St. John's said to the soldiers "We have all done our best; you as soldiers on the battlefield, I silently did mine. You fought and got badged, I prayed and cadged"; he must have raised a smile on the faces of many who listened.
- J. G. DOBSON.—We are not surprised to hear that since you induced your newsagent to take a number of copies of the *Freethinker* on the condition to take back all unsold copies, you have only had a "chance one" now and again to take back. This is an excellent plan, and others have found similar results when it has been adopted.
- J. A. REID.—That the late Professor Kingdon Clifford was a much more accurate thinker than Sir Oliver Lodge will not, we think, be disputed by anyone who has carefully studied and compared the two.
- A. M.—Our point was, that in allocating to religion the sphere of the "Unknowable," Spencer was really endorsing the opinion that belief in God rests on no other basis than that of ignorance.
- DR. B. DUNLOP writes: "Mr. J. T. Lloyd says that the struggle for existence will never be abolished. But surely the era of Freethought is coming when very few people in the world will have more than two children."
- E. POYNTON.—Please send on the MSS* Very pleased that an avowal of Atheism has led to no unpleasantness in the Army so far as you are concerned.
- T. MOSLEY.—We saw the notice of *Determinism* to which you refer. Naturally, we agree with it.
- R. WILSON.—A Church magazine which says so little about Jesus or Christianity, as the one you enclose, may certainly be regarded as a sign of the times.
- WEKERMTHIEMES.—Sorry we can't offer an explanation of what you say you saw. We should have to know very much more of the incident before we could venture. It is probably a case of counting the hit and forgetting the misses.
- E. B.—Thanks for more than usually interesting batch of cuttings. We hope to notice at some length, so soon as we can find space, some of the works referred to.
- G. D. SIDE.—See "Acid Drops." You were evidently too logical and too straight—unforgivable sins in connection with religion.
- R. H. ROSETTI.—Yes; your letter must have gone astray. We never received it. Pleased to hear from you, however, and to know you are well.
- G. B. TAYLOR.—After fifty years at sea, no one will deny your having done your share, or contest your right to a rest. We wish you continued good health to enjoy it. Pleased to hear

that you get more sense out of the *Freethinker* than from any other paper.

D. D.—For your own sake we wish your contribution was equal to your ambition, but it would make no difference to our appreciation of what is done.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street London, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4 by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.

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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.

By some means a paragraph we had written on Mr. Lloyd's visit to Abertillery on October 21 got mislaid, and so failed to appear in our last issue. We were glad to learn that the meetings were very successful, the hall being crowded both afternoon and evening. Everyone was highly delighted with the visit. To-day (November 4) Mr. Cohen lectures there in the same hall, and we hope the experience will be repeated.

The Interim Conference, held last Sunday at the Chandos Hall, resolved itself, as it was bound to do under present conditions, into a meeting of London members. The only exception was Mr. R. Chapman (South Shields), whom we were very pleased to see present. After some formal resolutions were disposed of, the rest of the afternoon and evening was devoted to a general discussion of topics in which all Freethinkers are more or less interested. That is an idea which may admit of greater development in the future.

The meeting on Sunday last expressed regret that Branches of the N. S. S. had not availed themselves of the resolution passed at the Annual Conference, asking that reports of meetings be sent to the *Freethinker*, and which the editor had promised to insert. The General Secretary had reminded Branches of this, but without avail. And, of course, the editor cannot insert what he does not receive. Branches are helped in every possible way by the *Freethinker*, and if enough reports are sent in, they could be placed under a separate heading. But they must reach this office by Monday evening or first post on Tuesday. The better way would be for Secretaries to send their reports on Sunday evening. Only a few lines are needed, and that could easily be done after the meeting had concluded.

As announced in another column, we have decided to close the Sustentation Fund on November 20. This will enable the last list of subscriptions to appear in the issue dated November 25. When the Bowman Bequest Case was decided in the House of Lords we had to explain, as a result of letters that reached us, that the *Freethinker* benefited in no way from that bequest. Other communications that have been received since force us to again make this clear. The *Freethinker* does not receive anything, either by way of subscription, or by way of payment for advertisement, from either the National Secular Society or from the Secular Society, Limited. And it, therefore, has no pecuniary interest in the Bowman Bequest. The whole of that bequest is intended, and will be available, for propagandist purposes in the shape of lectures and publications.

Although we have not said much lately about the fight with the L.C.C. over the sale of literature in the parks, it has been going on all the time. Following the hearing of the case in the Police Court, when a fine was inflicted, the Committee of Protest instructed Counsel to make application for a rule nisi for a mandamus ordering the Council to set on one side its resolution prohibiting all sales, and to decide each case on its merits. The rule was at once granted, and came on for hearing before Justices Darling, Ivory, and Sankey, on October 23. After arguments from Counsel, the Court, by a unanimous decision, made the rule absolute, Mr. Justice Darling remarking that he "was unable to see how the Court could give judgment in any other way without disregarding the rule and construction of the law."

This decision represents a complete rebuff for the L.C.C., the members of which were evidently under the impression that they could wipe out a public right by a general resolution. The Council has still the right of appeal, but it would be well advised to let the matter rest where it is. If it does, then the London ratepayers may be asked to express an opinion on what the *Star* well called "an insane waste of time and money." Of course, so far as the Protest Committee is concerned, this result has not been gained without much hard work and a considerable expenditure. On that latter point something may be said later. But Mr. Verinder, who is Chairman of the Committee, has spared no time or trouble in the matter, and there has been a considerable addition to the work of Miss Vance, who has acted as Secretary. Mr. Cohen is on the Committee as representing the National Secular Society.

Freethinkers will welcome the appearance of Mr. J. M. Robertson's new work, *The Jesus Problem: a Restatement of the Myth Theory* (Watts & Co., 5s. net). The present work is a following up of *The Historical Jesus* published last year and is intended to be a concise exposition of the myth theory of the origin of Christianity. Starting from a primitive and pre-Christian-Saviour-God cult, Mr. Robertson attempts—we think successfully attempts—to recreate the conditions, religious, social, and economic, that led to the establishment of historic Christianity. And, while the very nature of the subject precludes anything in the nature of demonstration, most unprejudiced readers will grant that Mr. Robertson makes out a strong, and, in most respects, an unanswerable case. In this connection the two chapters on "The Evolution of the Cult" and "Organization and Economics" stand out with special strength. The only word of criticism we have to offer is that, in our opinion, this work, as well as the one that preceded it, would have an added value for the general reader if it pursued a more uniform line of exposition, with less attention paid to the utterances of other writers on the same subject. We say this without in the least detracting from the value of an important piece of constructive writing.

The *Cambridge Magazine* records the death of Mr. F. C. Thompson, of Trinity, wounded on October 2, and who died on the following day, at the age of 29. He was placed in the first class, first division of the Classical Tripos, and, says the *Cambridge Magazine*,—

in spite of the fact that few men ever did more hard work in the space of three years, he found time, unlike most classics, to take sufficient interest in ideology to lose his Faith completely. He was one of those "Undergraduates mostly scholars of their Colleges" who, in 1909, addressed a letter of congratulation to the late Master of Emmanuel, Mr. Chawner, assuring him of their support in his courageous attempt to expose the Conspiracy of Silence by which the majority of Deans and Tutors succeed in preserving their charges from heterodox discussion.

We are indebted to a correspondent for a priced catalogue of a recent sale of autograph letters, in which four by Shelley realized no less than £369. One letter on eternal punishment is described by the auctioneers as "very extraordinary," and the catalogue gives from it the following sentence:—

I am not convinced. If God damns me, even by making me my own hell [as indeed sometimes, when I am in an ill-humour, he does in this life] it by no means follows that I *must* desire to be so damned. I may think it extremely disagreeable, as I

do, to be in an ill-temper, and wish to God that God would not have damned me in this or in any other manner.

We should very much like to see the whole of this letter. Coming from Shelley, who deliberately wrote himself Atheist, we suspect that much better things remain unquoted.

This evening the North London Branch debate is on the question "Should an Industrial Conscription Scheme include Women?" It will be opened by Miss Evans of the Women's Freedom League, and replied to by Mr. A. Eagar. Ample opportunity is afforded for discussion by Members of the audience, and the Committee cordially invite women of all shades of opinion. For time, etc., see Guide Notice.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

WE have decided to fix November 20 as the closing date of this Fund. This means three more issues of the *Freethinker* in which acknowledgments will be made, and by that time everyone who wishes to subscribe will have had an opportunity of doing so. Some subscribers have suggested keeping the Fund open during the continuance of the War, and others that the anticipated deficit for the current year should be subscribed in advance. So far as the first suggestion is concerned, we have a dislike to keeping a subscription list open indefinitely if it can be avoided. So far as its success is concerned, if enough were raised to meet the recurring deficit our task would be so much easier, and there would be no need to reopen the Fund next year. In that matter we are quite in the hands of our readers. But all will please note that the Fund closes on November 20.

Below is the list of acknowledgments to date:—

Eighth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £323 8s. 5d. S. Dobson, 4s. Anon (Manchester Meeting), 2s. 6d. Deneb (2nd sub.), 2s. 6d. T. Mosley, 2s. 6d. E. Pankhurst, 2s. 6d. M. Pankhurst, 2s. 6d. G. B. Taylor, 2s. 6d. J. W. Davis, 2s. 6d. M. Barnard, 5s. D. D., 3s. Three Coventry Atheists, 7s. H. Organ, 4s. G. T. Bowman, 3s. H. T. C., £1. H. Adams, 2s. 6d. H. A. Lupton, 5s. J. Murphy, 2s. S. E., 2s. O. B., 3s. T. W. Arnott, 9s. 6d. J. Lazarnick, £1 1s. J. Foote, 10s. Mrs. Bertha Siger, 2s. 6d. Per Manchester Branch—G. Bailey, 5s.; R. Clayton, 2s. 6d.

Per H. T. Knott:—E. Eastlake, 1s.; R. Montgomery, 1s.; P. Stacey, 1s.; H. Atkinson, 1s.; L. Box, 6d.; A. Lindsay, 6d.; B. Gargeeke, 6d.; C. Gray, 3s.; F. T. Knott, 2s. 6d. Total: £330 7s. 11d.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL.

It was as a young curate in Trinidad that doubt first assailed my soul. I mention this because it was doubt in the end that sealed my career as an Anglican clergyman—the utter inability I experienced to believe implicitly all I was required to teach, and the hopelessness, the misery, the impossibility, of remaining in a calling which every tradition of honour and honesty, and every vestige of decency and good feeling, demanded I should abandon once and for all. But it took me seven years to reach a final decision and to arrive at a moment when, penniless and without a single earthly prospect, I threw off my black coat and white tie and emerged once again in the world a free man. All this, of course, I will describe later; for the present I will endeavour, as best I can, to describe the actual working life, as well as the mental condition, of a man into whose heart and mind was gradually creeping a doubt as to the possibility, let alone the probability, or the truthfulness or otherwise, of the dogmas and doctrines he was required to teach, with behind him that very infallibility, at which even the Anglican clergy jeer when they denounce it as it thunders out its decrees from the papal chair of Rome. In a way, so far as my ecclesiastical education was concerned, I never had a chance.—Raymond Blathwayt, "Through Life and Round the World."

The Story of the Sugar Industry.

IV.

(Concluded from p. 677.)

IN 1871 France was the foremost beet sugar-producing State; Germany was then far in the rear of her rival. The German Government, however, promptly busied itself in establishing its native sugar industry on a firm foundation, while the French producers and refiners remained without State aid. And while the German producer paid a duty on the weight of his roots a powerful inducement was furnished to the farmer to raise roots containing an increased percentage of sugar juice, as he was taxed on the weight of his crops and not on their sugar-yielding capacity. This system promoted both a rapid increase in the richness of the roots and a constant improvement in the extractor's art. Superior culture and refining were thus rewarded by handsome profits. In France, unfortunately, the factories were forced to pay the full sugar duty, and no encouragement seems to have been offered to the progressive farmer or manufacturer.

In 1871 the French produced 284,444 tons of sugar, but in 1884 no increase was apparent. On the other hand, the German output had risen during the same period from 186,000 to 1,123,000 tons. Confronted with this startling disparity, while realizing that their rivals had not only vastly increased their production, but that the percentage of sugar yielded by their beets had advanced from 8.28 to 11 per cent., whereas the yielding qualities of French roots had remained stationary at a mere 6 per cent., the Republic determined in 1884 to imitate the German example. A low duty based on the very poor yield of the French crops was imposed with revolutionary results. The author of *The Statistical Aspect of the Sugar Question*, George Martineau, states that:—

Better seed was sown in France, better methods of manufacture were adopted, the diffusion process was substituted for the old hydraulic presses, and the yield of the sugar began to rise by leaps and bounds. From 6 per cent. it soon went up to 7, 8, 9, and 10 per cent. But as the French producers were allowed the full drawback (the money refunded by the excise on the exportation of excisable commodities of home manufacture) on exportation although they were paying only a small fraction off the duty on the sugar they produced, the revenue began to show a great and constantly increasing loss.

The profits of the French manufacturers reached in 1886-7 the huge sum of 91,966,437 francs (£3,678,657). Sugar was then taxed in a more discriminating manner; profits fell, but from 1884 to 1896 the yield of beet sugar had risen from 6 to 11 per cent., while the crop had increased from 265,000 to 668,000 tons.

In 1888 the German Government began to modify its earlier policy and slowly changed the system, whereby it charged a duty on the roots to a method which taxed the sugar actually manufactured. In 1892 this change was completely accomplished, and all the sugar produced became liable to duty, while the makers continued to enjoy a bonus on exported sugar. In 1871 the German exports of refined sugar were 5,809 tons, but the expansion was so immense that in 1896 they were 760,657 out of a total production of 2,000,000 tons.

In France, Austria, and Germany, great sugar industries have been developed, although Austria has proved itself an expert in the art of muddling through. In that country for a long period State interference was of very questionable benefit either to the Exchequer or the consumer. Prior to the War, Russia produced more than one million tons of beet sugar annually, but the

price has always been extravagant to her own people. The production in Russia in 1875 was 159,000 tons only. From the same year onwards German raw beet sugar exports, although subject to variation, have been fairly steady, while the Austrian exports have varied widely from season to season. The exports from France have fluctuated enormously. They have fallen to 3,000, and have risen to 300,000 tons in different years.

In its infancy and adolescence the beet industry was artificially fostered, developed with giant strides, and easily outran its competitor the sugar-cane in the world's markets. Now that the beet product is of age, it is supposed to be able to stand alone. A few support the view that the cane still possesses a promising future. But that is no reason why the beet should not be extensively cultivated in the British Isles where we ought, at least, to produce a third of the sugar we consume.

From the standpoint of production the cane—a tropical or sub-tropical plant—has several advantages over the beet. Its yield per acre is much heavier, and its methods of manufacture have undergone great improvements, but the cane sugar plantations are thousands of miles across the ocean, while the European beet growers and refiners have their customers near at hand. At present the largest sugar-consuming population of the Old World is shut off from its usual sources of supply. Hence the sugar famine. In the words of a shrewd observer:—

With a market for 1,600,000 tons of sugar at our doors, and a good soil and climate, we import it all and read the sugar market report day by day under the cheerful heading of "Foreign Produce." Germany, in the meantime, with a home demand not much more than half of ours, not only supplies all her own sugar but has, every year, more than a million tons for exportation, half of which is refined sugar. These are curious facts, of which the general public, and even our rulers, know little and care less.

The American Government having sugar industries of its own to care for was determined that these should not suffer ruin at the hands of European bounty-fed sugar. The astute Americans were perfectly agreeable to an extensive importation of this artificially fostered commodity, but they were careful to see that their Customs reaped the advantages arising from the receipt of foreign sugar at less than its real cost of production. Hundreds of thousands of tons of beet root sugar were unloaded at American ports. The United States revenue was enriched at the expense of Germany and Austria, and the price at which the sugar was retailed in American markets permitted the home producer to realize his sugar at a profit. Incidentally the policy pursued by the States proved the salvation of the West Indian planters who found in North America the only market in which they were protected from cut-throat competition. In a similar manner the Indian authorities secured relief to our own Eastern planters.

When, after much contention, the findings of the Brussels Convention came into force in 1903, and the bounty-fed sugar supply ceased, all the wise men predicted that the price of sugar would at once rise by leaps and bounds. But, somehow or other, the price of the article continued to be regulated by supply and demand. With an abundant sugar crop prices were low, and when the yield was below the average, prices rose. In 1904-5 the European beet crop suffered keenly from the prolonged drought, and the sugar yield was nearly one and a quarter million tons below the estimated return. Naturally prices advanced, but many people completely lost sight of the fact that the consumers had placed too much reliance on the

products of a small European area for their permanent sugar supplies. This utterly anomalous state of things was the direct consequence of our great dependence upon bounty-fed beets. In 1905 a larger acreage was sown with roots, mainly because of the high prices then ruling. The season proved successful, and a splendid crop was gathered. Prices fell so low that sugar was marketed below the cost of production in August, 1905. More recently consumption has increased faster than production in sugar as in cereals. The high prices of meat and grain cause agriculturists even in the beet countries to favour an increased production of live stock and grain.

In the cane lands these particular factors do not materially enter. Therefore, other things equal, we shall probably in the future depend to a greater degree than at present on cane sugar. Among other, if less important sweetening substances, Palmyra Jaggery deserves mention. This sugar is well known in India, where its juice is drawn from one of the native palm-trees, and run into earthen vessels suspended from a furrowed stick, which permits the flow of the juice into the receiving-pot. A daily collection of the sugar-pots takes place, and the juice is boiled down to the point of crystallization. Noel Paton estimates that this excellent palm sugar yields the respectable total of 560,000 tons annually. In extracting the sugar, the bark of the palm-tree is not incised, as some writers have erroneously stated. "The long flower is tied up and a piece cut off at the top. The pot is tied on, and the juice flows into it from the wound. It is cut again when the juice ceases to flow, and so from day to day."

With the American sugar maple, however, the juice is extracted by tapping the bark. The annual consumption of this divine sugar in America amounts to 11,000 tons; but the luxury is so highly prized in the land of its origin that it is all consumed there. Sorghum is another kind of sugar extracted from the stalk of a grain-producing plant, but it is very inferior in quality, and is never likely to enter into serious competition with the beet or cane.

The Mincing Lane sugar market still survives, but its glories have sadly faded. The decline and fall of the old West Indian imports led to mournful changes in the Lane sugar centre. Down to the 'sixties, a vast amount of solid business was transacted where a busy speculative market now reigns. The British refiner continues to produce the finest sugar, but he is denied the facilities for delivery which his foreign competitor commands. At every port in our sea-girt isles sugar is unloaded from the vessels as they arrive, and then forwarded to its destination.

There is little doubt that the furiously assailed Brussels Convention, in abolishing the bounty system, helped to preserve the cane industry from destruction. The world requires all the sugar it can obtain, and let us trust that both the cane and beet industries will continue to flourish. After the comparative failure of the beet crop in 1909, Europe was short of sugar, but its troubles were eased by larger supplies of the cane commodity. As a careful writer stated in December, 1909, we should then have been "faced with a shortage of about half-a-million tons in the European needs for sugar were it not for the most welcome increase in the production of cane sugar, and that increase could not and would not have occurred under the bounty system."

T. F. PALMER.

"Cleanliness is next to godliness," says the proverb. Yet English people lived without soap till the seventeenth century.

Is There a Religious Revival in France?

I.

IT is an old saying that the wish is often father to the thought. We find how true it is when we note—as we so often do—the emphatic assurance of our religious friends that there is a great revival of the sentiment and practice of religion, and that this alleged rebirth is an outcome of the gigantic efforts we are making to keep the freedom we have so long enjoyed, and to bring the "blonde beast," the Teutonic barbarian, by his own methods of blood and iron, into line with civilization as we know it. Now, it is not unreasonable to think that anything that tends to concentrate a man's efforts, to make him more deeply serious, will also make him more religious if he be already a believer. But, on the other hand, it will also confirm many in their Freethought; for it is not an easy thing to reconcile the bellicose exhortations of the Bishop of Oxford, and others of his type, with the ideal of the brotherhood of man, with the conscientious objections of their Lord and Master. The clerical mind runs naturally to hypocrisy, to humbug, conscious and unconscious. The one thing that will save humanity, we are told, is a revival of worship; therefore, signs of this revival must be found, even if common sense and logic go by the board. I, for one, must confess not to have found any trace of such a rebirth, although I have kept a sharp look-out. The Churches are certainly not better filled now than before the War, when the papers were lamenting their emptiness. The men who are now in the trenches may all be profoundly religious, or they may not. It is possible that they may not want to hurt the feelings of a chaplain whom they have found a good fellow, although a bit of a fool. With the prospect, at any moment, of a violent issue out of all their afflictions, they may regard a man's belief or unbelief as a small affair in comparison with what the man is in himself. If the parson be wise—which is perhaps too much to expect of him—he will discount the complaisance of men who are busy with more important affairs, and seek consolation at home in the opportune, if not opportunist, conversion of those buttresses of our intellectual life—Mr. Bottomley and Mr. H. G. Wells. I am assured, by my religious friends, that the support of the combined theological authority of these two gentlemen means a new lease of life for Theism. Yet there are malicious people who insinuate that these earnest seekers after spiritual truth are really pragmatists at heart. They have the impudence to say that for Mr. Bottomley the Deity is a business proposition, and Mr. Wells had found that his studies in sexual ethics were cut out by the profounder knowledge of what the public wants, as displayed by "Victoria Cross" and Mr. Hubert Wales. Not caring to repeat his earlier successes, from the delightful *Time-machine* to *Tono-Bungay*, we are told that, heartened by the conversion of his friend, Mr. Bottomley, he determined to discover a new God.

II.

However that may be, and it would no doubt be foolish to attach too much importance to a criticism obviously prompted by malice and envy, my subject here is not the conversion of two distinguished publicists, but the alleged religious revival in France. I must, therefore, ask my reader to look with me at a little book just published, called *Recent French Tendencies*, by the Rev. G. C. Rawlinson. My excuse for analysing what is really a flimsy piece of work is that it reflects a familiar type of the clerical mind, a type which is complacently satisfied with inadequate knowledge and loose thinking. It has also

an airy assumption of omniscience, which is calculated to impose on those who have no means of checking the assertions. It begins with some silly observations about the closing years of the centuries, when, we are assured, writers seem to look back to what has gone before, rather than to what is to come. Now, the hastiest glance at our literature in the periods 1580-1600, 1680-1700, 1780-1800, is sufficient to convince anyone who is not a parson, or has not a theory to support at any cost, that they were pre eminently periods of expansion, of a forward movement, rather than of relaxed vigour and decadence. To labour this point would be to take the reverend gentleman more seriously than he deserves. But if these periods were full of creative and forward-reaching activity, what shall we say of 1880-1900? We are asked to believe that there was nothing but exhaustion in the twenty years that gave us the work in poetry of Francis Thompson, John Davidson, Mr. Yeats, Dowson; the fiction, at the ripest, of Mr. Hardy, Mr. George Moore, Henry James, Mr. Kipling, Mr. Wells, Mr. Frank Harris, and Hubert Crackanthorpe; the literary criticism of Mr. Arthur Symonds and Mr. A. C. Bradley; the sociology of Mr. J. M. Robertson and Mr. Havelock Ellis. Did any period ever show fewer signs of being played out?

III.

Mr. Rawlinson is so little acquainted with the history of Freethought in the nineteenth century that he imagines that Huxley dominated the Rationalism of the period, and, what is more amazing, he assures his readers that this amusing, if somewhat belated opponent of Mr. Gladstone and the bishops is still living, as he puts it, a precarious life-in-death in the columns of the *Freethinker*, and in the books of Mr. Joseph McCabe. I am, unfortunately, not in a position to question his justice to the anti-Christian polemic of Mr. McCabe, for the only things of his I have looked into are a novel and a book on Mr. Bernard Shaw. The novel is an anæmic-picture of the full-blooded life of the Italian Renaissance. It might have appeared in the pages of the *Christian World* under the name of Annie Swan, so little does it remind us of Cellini, or our own Webster. The depreciation of Shaw is as dull as the appreciations of M. Hamon and Mr. Henderson. None of them seem to see that Mr. Shaw is, or rather was—because the War has killed him—a twentieth century W. S. Gilbert. However that may be, the suggestion that the spirit of Huxley lives in the pages of this paper, or in the books of unacademic Rationalists is the last thing in silliness. Huxley was merely doing for educated people what had been done more effectively for the artizan thinker a generation before, and his method, often enough, came in for strongly adverse criticism in these pages, and in the work of Mr. J. M. Robertson.

IV.

So much, then, for Mr. Rawlinson's knowledge of English literature and the Freethought Movement. We shall proceed to note if he is any better qualified to instruct the earnest inquirer to the movement of French thought. Naturally, the Rationalism of the Voltairean type is as hateful to him as it was to Joseph de Maistre, and he has this in common with the earlier writer—he sticks at nothing in the way of abuse. The bitterness he puts into his account of Renan is the measure of the immense effectiveness of the Frenchman's method. He cannot forgive Renan and M. Anatole France their tone of urbane condescension, their smiling refusal to accept Christianity at the valuation of those who believe in it. He notes how, in his witty short story "The Procurator of Judea," M. France makes a point of wounding the susceptibility of Christians. But this was in 1892, and now, of course, M. France has lost his hold on the youth

of the country. Presumably they are all mystics, or political pragmatists like M. Bourget! I know some, however, who find Remy de Gourmont more to their taste, his dissociation of ideas being a more powerful dissolvent than anything in Renan's or M. France's critical laboratory. But it is possible that Mr. Rawlinson and his friends have never heard of Remy de Gourmont, whose strong point was the cultivation of ideas.

After disposing of the Voltairean sceptics and wicked writers of naturalistic fiction like Flaubert and Zola, he fills in, in a sketchy manner, the history of Modernism, which I may describe as a sort of Freethought within the Catholic Church. It has attracted some of the best and most thoughtful minds in France; but salvation seemingly does not lie in the direction of reason, it lies rather in that of faith. Much comfort is found in the conversion of Huysmans, who returned to the Church of his ancestors when he had exhausted all the possibilities of sensation. This, however, is not a matter of wonder in a country where Catholicism is a part of the literary tradition. Nor is the return of M. Bourget or Brunetière to the religion of their childhood any indication of a religious revival. Its significance was in the main personal. Believing and practising Catholics in France have not attached much importance to it. There was always the uncomfortable feeling, as M. Dimnet confesses, that these "intellectual converts might be Catholics—as Voltaire was a Deist—from practical necessities postulating higher principles." In a word, they might be, as so many are, mere political or social pragmatists.

V.

But it is in the younger generation of writers that Mr. Rawlinson finds proof of the revival of belief in France. He makes a parade of three of them: Psichari, a grandson of Renan, Peguy, and M. Paul Claudel, the last being a writer of mediæval mystery dramas in a Whitmanesque prose, and odes that may be sound expositions of Catholic faith, if nothing else. Only a critic who has no reputation to lose would claim them as great writers. They were, or are, good patriots, but not better patriots because of their belief. Now, the misfortune is that for the reader whom Mr. Rawlinson has in mind, a reader but little versed in contemporary French letters, they may seem to represent current thought in France. Nothing could be more misleading. If a few writers and a number of friends make noise enough, there will always be a crowd of noisier acclaimers. We have an example here in the group of gentlemen, young and middle-aged, who are kind enough to afford us amusement and instruction in the pages of the *New Witness* and the *Dublin Review*. With the exception of Mr. Chesterton, who is a man of genius, although he is unfortunate in not possessing the "first-class intellectual apparatus" which Mr. Arnold Bennett modestly claims for himself and his Rationalist friends, the bulk of them are men of talent, whose only fault is that they shout a little too much. Now, they do not impose on many of us, but a Frenchman might easily mistake them for an important factor in English thought.

But, after all, an English cleric with a leaning to Roman Catholic dogma and a superficial knowledge of his subject is hardly the best witness to an alleged revival of Catholic belief and practice in France. We have only to take up M. Alfred Loisy's *The War and Religion* to get at the truth of the matter. He admits that there may be a revival of faith, but only among those who believe already. Those who have not abandoned the religion of their childhood, through conviction and faith, he says, have practised it again with enthusiasm. It is probable, too, that some half-believers have

persuaded themselves that they do believe, and so perform the outward acts of faith. The mere taking part in religious acts in camp or hospital does not imply that a man has abandoned his Freethought; rather it is a friendly act towards believers—it is to please the kindly sister or pious lady whose days are devoted to the care of the wounded. For the same reasons an unbeliever may wear a pious medal. He has no wish to hurt the feelings of a mother or sister, or, indeed, of any kindly person who offers one. The Catholic journalists delude themselves if they imagine a Freethinker will be any the less a Freethinker after the War, because the differences between believer and unbeliever do not count in face of the absorbing interest of the moment.

"Among those who die gloriously for their country," M. Loisy tells us,

are some who have retained the feeling of Christian hope, while there are others, and large numbers of them, to whom these feelings are unknown. It is not becoming, that Catholic journalists should have the assurance to try to persuade us that only priests and believers in the old faith know how to die.....A young soldier, who had the faith once but no longer has it, being asked about this spirit of Catholicism, which is said to pervade our whole army, answered thus: "Without any prejudice, I can affirm that I have never known a single soldier, either in the trenches or in the rear, give any proof of the least anxiety about religion." Nevertheless these men do not ignore the fact that they are in continual and immediate peril of death. "They know by daily experience that death may overtake them at any minute; and they do not even think about a future life. I firmly believe that nothing pertaining to religion exists any longer so far as they are concerned.".....It is not for the sake of the God of the Christians that those die who believe on him, nor do they die in order that they may go to him. Certainly it is an august life for which a man will sacrifice his own without grudging it; but it is not for a blessed immortality in the company of Christ and the saints: it is for the life of the country.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

Leisure.

(THE CRY OF THE WORKER.)

THE murmuring breezes sweetly sing

The music of the spheres;

Within these dreary walls I bow

My weary head in tears.

The honeysuckle fragrance sheds;

The lark sings loud and free;

The cowslip droops its golden head—

Such joys are not for me.

The sunshine cannot enter here,

And laughter dies at birth;

My soul within me faints to taste

The goodly joys of earth.

For those who toil not, neither spin,

My weary fingers ply;

I give them leisure, wealth, and hope—

They grudge me time to die.

P. A.

Obituary.

The Birmingham Branch has just lost in Mr. J. Terry, who died on the 22nd inst., and was buried at Lodge Hill Cemetery on the 26th, one of its oldest members. Throughout the long period of his membership he was a consistent worker and supporter of the Branch. Always ready to proclaim his opinions and pour scorn on the creations of superstition. He survived his wife only a few months, and the severance of a long and happy union was a heavy blow to him. A Secular Service was read at the grave side, and the sympathy of the members of the Branch goes out to the surviving members of the family.—J. P.

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, Nov. 8, at 7.30.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, "Should an Industrial Conscription Scheme Include Women?" Affirmative, A. Eager; negative, Miss Evans (Women's Freedom League).

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Tube Station): 7, C. E. Ratcliffe, "Why I Am Not a Christian."

WEST CENTRAL HALL (31 Alfred Place, Store Street, Tottenham Court Road): 3.30, Dr. Boulenger, "Morality and Alcohol."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ABERTILLERY (New Era Union, Tillery Institute): 3 and 6, C. Cohen, Lectures.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, F. E. Willis, "The Decay of Faith."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street): 7, C. V. Ashurst, "Religion and Science."

NEW MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Bakers' Hall, 56 Swan Street): 6.30, The Secretary, "Some Duties of a Freethinker, and Branch Objects."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Fowler Street, Victoria Hall Buildings, second floor): 6.30, J. Fothergill, "The Two Paths."

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

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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