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Views and Opinions.

The Decline of Faith.

Following the burst of—call it imaginative rhetoric, concerning the great revival of religion that followed the outbreak of War, preachers are now generally declaring that religion is in a bad way, and that unless something drastic is done the end of the War will bring disaster. But while this change of attitude is striking there is nothing new in the lament. Christian preachers have hardly ever ceased lamenting the lack of interest in religion. And in modern times the complaint has been continuous. People will not attend church; or, if they do, they pay little attention to the teachings delivered or the amount of disbelief is growing. The situation is a curious one. An all-conquering creed is always in danger of defeat. People throw off a religion which, we are told, answers their deepest needs, and for which their whole nature clamours; the intentions of an omnipotent God are baffled by the creatures he has called into existence. A sense of the ridiculous would surely prevent preachers making claims one moment and demolishing them the next. But a sense of the ridiculous might well prevent their being preachers, and even wipe out their religion altogether.

* * *

A Cardinal Truth.

Now, as Freethinkers, we are not questioning the truth of the complaint. Every Freethinker knows it is true, and it would be well if Christians, even of the professing variety, set themselves to find out *why* it is true. Every civilized country in the world grows steadily less religious. That is a statement which does not admit of serious question. And the civilized world grows less religious in the face of enormously powerful influences to keep it Christian. In this country, for example, Christianity is still the official faith. Its financial resources are great, and its social influence extensive. No one gains anything—in a material sense—by rejecting Christianity, its profession opens up many an avenue to advancement. A large army of writers

still find it to their interest to support Christianity. Some deliberately write what they know to be untrue; others suppress the truth so that its expression will not interfere with their market. Current periodical literature is "controlled" in a far more efficient way than is sugar. This procedure is sometimes excused on the plea of "deference to public opinion," or because "the public is not ripe for the whole truth to be told." But it is a pitiable condition of things at the best. Yet the facts are, first, that every inducement is held out to a person to profess Christianity; second, that Christianity is admittedly losing ground. Why is this the case?

* * *

An Alien Creed.

The answer is partly given, or at least suggested, in the remark made above, namely, the complaint of the preacher is an old one. In the Western world people have been always, more or less, giving up Christianity. That religion has always sat uneasily on the shoulders of the progressive races of the world. And the Churches have in turn been engaged in a constant attempt to modify their teachings so as to suit newer ideas, varied with spasms of persecution to perpetuate orthodox ones. The history of the heresies and persecutions of the Christian Church have at bottom this significance. Sometimes the official Churches have been strong enough to suppress the revolt for a time, only for it to break out in another form. Moreover, Christianity was, to the West, from the first, an alien creed. Its teachings, its ideals, are essentially Eastern. Indeed, it may be said that none of the Western nations possess a religion born of the soil. It was forced upon the West from without, and it has been maintained more or less by force all along. And the unsuitability of the imposed religion is shown by the fact that the revolts against it have been continuous. The underlying fact in nearly all the revolts against the rule of the Christian Church is, that the Western mind was struggling against the dominance of a religious creed alien to it in origin, in spirit, in idea, and in ideal.

* * *

Rival Aims.

A religion that was born of contemporary knowledge and needs, one which reflected life, would not need an elaborate official machinery to guard it from attack and to keep it alive. It would keep itself alive; the difficult thing would be to diminish either its vitality or its influence. The aim of Christianity and that of Freethought is here in striking and significant opposition. The purpose of Christianity is to erect a wall round man, to create a world within a world, to perpetuate an artificial environment in which certain ideas may flourish. The aim of Freethought is to break down the barriers which shut off man from the influence of the widest and best knowledge, to expose him to the full current of contemporary life, and to leave all ideas subject to that healthy competition without which the best is robbed of the greater part of their value. The aim of the one is crystallized as "Keep yourself unspotted from the world"; the ideal of the other is "Keep the world

free from spot." And these two aims are seen in clear and sharp contrast in the matter of education. For several generations the object of the Churches has been to seclude the child from the full play of contemporary life. The purpose of the religious teacher is to keep certain knowledge away from the child, in order that certain other ideas may develop unchecked and uncorrected. The aim of the secular teacher is to give the child the full benefit of all the world has to offer it, and to so train its faculties that it may use them to the best advantage.

* * *

The Clash of Cultures.

In addition, Christianity suffers from a disadvantage common to all religions. In a civilized country, religion is not something that man creates, as he creates his art, his literature, or his politics. It is something he inherits. The religions of all civilized people, the gods of every civilized race, come to them from the past. They reflect, of necessity, the life of the time to which they properly belong. Can anyone imagine a modern Englishman, or Frenchman, or American, creating a religion like Christianity with its Virgin born Saviour, its doctrine of blood sacrifice, its heaven and hell, its angels and devils? On the face of it, these represent ideas that belong to another stage of culture than ours. And the attempt to force them upon a people to whom they are wholly unsuited, creates that opposition to progressive ideas that religion manifests all over the world. This struggle is not accidental; it is inevitable. Ideas are like organisms, inasmuch as if they are to live, they must find a suitable environment. And a modern environment is, of all, most unsuitable to religious beliefs. The result is, that in sheer self-preservation, Christianity is driven to perpetuate the past so long as it can. It must obstruct if it is to live. And, of necessity, the fight becomes more difficult with the growth of each generation. Every advance makes the next step easier. The freer human life becomes, the easier for more modern and more progressive ideals to find expression. Long ago the physical sciences freed themselves from the control of religion. The science of biology has almost, if not quite, run the same course. Morals and sociology are, because of their greater complexity and later development, still under the influence of religion. But the same process is at work here; it is evident to all who care to observe it. Life, as a whole, is shaking itself free of religion, and those who are working for the complete emancipation of the human mind know that the wailings of a professional priesthood cannot permanently affect the final result.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Essence of Christianity.

II.

We cannot call attention too frequently or too emphatically to the fact, now incontestably established by the comparative study of religions, that Christianity possesses no uniqueness or originality whatever. It is simply one of many similar cults. This fact is frankly acknowledged by the most enlightened theologians, who account for it by affirming that in no nation under the sun has God left himself without witness, but that the supreme, final witness is Christ. Their contention is that whilst to all peoples God made a partial and imperfect revelation of himself, the complete and perfect manifestation of his redemptive purpose was granted only to the Jews. According to them, there is some truth in every religion, but the whole truth, in the dazzling splendour of its power, is to be found in Christianity alone. When it is scrutinized with critical minute-

ness, this claim is seen to be founded on the sand of prejudice, the truth being that the adherent of each cult thinks his own is the truest and most holy of all, and that, in reality, there is very little to choose between them. When they are told this fact, Christians generally are shocked beyond measure, and refuse to believe it; but they are led by ministers who are hopelessly biased against the truth, while the majority are culpably ignorant of its very existence. The essence of Christianity, according to the New Testament and the Creeds, is the doctrine of personal salvation by faith in the atoning sacrifice of Christ on Calvary; and there are thousands of Christians in this country alone who regard this as the distinguishing characteristic of their religion. We have heard it asserted again and again, not so long ago, that the fact of the God-man dying for the sins of the world is peculiar to Christianity, whereas, as now wholly proved, it is common to all the great religions. Pagan mythology abounds with strange stories of God-men and Saviour-Gods doing precisely the same thing. In his incomparable article in the *R.P.A. Annual* for 1918, Professor Gilbert Murray says:—

"The Faithful Son" is a protector to the helpless. The women, children, and old men huddle together in their hiding-place from some object of terror; the Young Man goes out and faces the Terrible Thing, slays it or beats it back. Sometimes he dies; then they know he has died for them, and only then their passionate gratitude rises to its full height. Of course, in those religions where human sacrifice was customary the death which the Redeemer faced was often—perhaps most often—the voluntary death at the altar; voluntary death to atone for the sins of others. Ancient religion thrills and reverberates with the splendour or horror of these stories..... You need a Friend like that; one who has died for you, willingly, deliberately, though he was so much finer and better than you. Only of course he must also be alive; otherwise he would not be there. He died and now lives.

Such is the teaching of mythology on the theme under consideration, and we learn that all the great religions are at once concerning it. For lost and ruined humanity the only possible salvation is through faith in a slain and risen Redeemer. The story, differently told in different religions, but essentially the same, falls to pieces the moment the eye of criticism alights upon it. Now, in mythology, the next in importance to the idea of the Faithful Son is that of the Ideal Mother, and the one is quite as unnatural and absurd as the other. This is what Professor Murray says about the second idea:—

The Christian Mother has rejected all elements of fertility; she has neither lover nor husband, nor even children except the One. She has as little difficulty as Ishtar herself in combining the attributes of Mother and Virgin; but she rejects from both every element that is not consistent with the utmost ideal of spirituality. The Virgin's purity, the Mother's compassion—these she accepts, but no more. Even the joy and pride of motherhood, a birthright of every mother, is too earthly for her.

The Madonna, though exquisitely beautiful, is a contradiction in terms, and the Faithful Son is equally so. They are both anachronisms, and their survival is exclusively due to the persistence of superstition.

Of course, myths have not been created out of nothing, any more than the material world and its contents. Like *logos*, *muthos* etymologically means a word, saying, speech, fable, fiction, story, and is generally employed to signify "a conjectural narrative presented as historical, but without any basis of fact." Myth, then, is a purely imaginary product, or an idea converted into a fact. God is a myth, so is the Christ of theology, and pre-eminently so is the Virgin Mother. Such beings never existed at all save as creatures of the fancy. And yet

we would not be justified in concluding that a myth does not rest on a basis of truth. Indeed, behind almost every myth there lies an imperishable truth, which the myth, as a rule, succeeds in effectually concealing. That is to say, the myth itself is entirely false, but the idea out of which it was made represented some fact or truth of Nature. God is man supernaturalized; a chimera; and genuine believers in God have very little, if any, faith in man. The result is, that an imaginary Deity throws real man into the shade and causes him to depreciate himself as a lost and guilty sinner, or a despicable worm. Now, what is the truth of Nature out of which the Christian myth grew, but which, instead of revealing, it in reality hides? Professor Murray says:—

It speaks to those who are oppressed by the struggle of life, who are half blinded by the brutishness and the cruelty of the mutual devouring that rages round them, and it tells them that the struggle is not the whole of life. In the midst of the struggle there is a seed, weak but for ever growing, which is the antithesis of the struggle. Amid all the wrongs done by man to man, man is not all brute, but he is also God; there is an Eternal Mother brooding over her children; there is an Eternal Brother or Champion who, through love, dies for his fellow-man.

On one point, with due deference, we are forced to differ from the learned Professor. It seems to us incredible that a Supernatural myth expresses a natural truth. Is it not rather true that the Supernatural is conceived as stepping in for the purpose of covering and making up for the defects of the natural? What Professor Murray says about the redeeming forces inherent in humanity is, doubtless, perfectly true; but it is not a truth taught by revealed religion. The Son of God is represented as coming into the world to do for man what man could not possibly have done for himself; not to reveal man to himself, but to save him from himself. Self-trust is a crime, and trust in God the only saving virtue. This is the Gospel story which constitutes the inner essence of Christianity. Well, this Gospel story the Regius Professor of Greek at Oxford calls a myth; but he goes on to say that, if this story were disproved, as it easily can be, "the result would probably be the re-birth of a purified Christianity, because, then, Christianity would be set free from its dogmas, which are incredible, and its historical statements, which are improbable in the extreme, and we should be able to see what it was really aiming at." We maintain, on the contrary, that the result would be the complete disappearance of Christianity. Disprove its dogmas, discredit its historical statements, and how much of the religion of the Cross would there be left? As the late Professor Drummond used to say in his orthodox days, humanity is doomed to remain lost for ever on the natural plane unless the Supernatural dips down, lays hold of it, and lifts it up into its own sphere. This is what Christianity has always claimed to be both able and eager to do, but which it has never succeeded in actually doing. What we need is not "the re-birth of a purified Christianity," but the rediscovery of man as at once the child and the potential Lord of Nature, and as possessing within himself all the faculties calculated, when intelligently utilized, to bring out into full activity the glorious possibilities slumbering within him. He has it in him to be his own saviour and the Saviour of all his fellows.

J. T. LLOYD.

In my early days I constantly made the foolish supposition that conclusive proofs would change beliefs, but experience has long since dissipated my faith in man's rationality.—
Herbert Spencer.

A Loyal Soldier of Freedom.

I would have all men come out of Christendom into the universe.—*John Davidson.*

Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment,
Pioneers! O pioneers.—*Walt Whitman.*

THE reproach has often been levelled against our insular art that it is Philistine. The French artistic sense lifts itself out of that ruck. It may go to the dogs, but it is not Philistine. As a fact, art in France, in all its divisions, is Bohemian. There is no risk that the bulk of our English writers and artists will ever be Bohemian. Miss Marie Corelli and Mr. Hall Caine are eminently respectable, and Mr. Rudyard Kipling is a robust Tory. Nowadays, with us, James Thomsons are exceptional; but so is the genius of that gifted poet who sang of *The City of Dreadful Night*. If any foreigner shall throw this up in our faces we may take refuge behind the broad backs of Algernon Swinburne and John Davidson. Neither of these singers dwelt beside the still waters. To think of their literary careers is to think of alarms and excursions, of the goddess Grundy in hysterics, of tabernacle calling unto conventicle, of manifold re-cremations and vituperations. We may wish that these two poets had not been compelled so often to exchange their pens for their swords; but on their careers all will look with pride to whom the glory of English literature is dear. The bright flame of their enthusiasm has always burned for right issues and nobles causes. Their eagerness for battle has been in the cause of Freedom against conventions and traditions. Swinburne is already a classic, and beyond praise or blame; but John Davidson deserves our attention as he so worthily carried on the splendid tradition of his illustrious predecessor.

John Davidson won his separate place in the literature of our country by his *Fleet Street Eclogues* and his *Ballads and Songs*. The appearance of the latter volume raised a storm, for the frequenters of Exeter Hall could not endure his *Ballads of a Nun* and *Thirty Bob a Week*. Respectable folk were, indeed, startled. Admirers of the placid and comfortable verses of Lewis Morris were not accustomed to the beauty or the freedom of John Davidson's poems. It was a very long way from the sugary *Epic of Hades*, which was irreverently called the "Hades of an Epic," to John Davidson's powerful muse.

Like most pioneers, John Davidson had to be content with soldier's wages. In one of his latest books, *The Triumph of Mammon*, published in 1907, he told his readers he was fifty years old, and that nine-tenths of his time, and that which is more precious, had been wasted in the endeavour to earn a livelihood. He also complained that the age was too commercial, too entirely in the grip of economics, too immoderate in its pleasures of every kind of temporary interest and ephemeral issue, to care for poetry. He pointed out that the mind, the imagination of our time, was not healthy enough, not serious enough, not joyful enough, not passionate enough, for the highest in literature. So John Davidson cast his book upon the waters, and appealed to a court of supremacy—"the dozen superior persons scattered throughout the universe," as it has been called wittily.

Small wonder that John Davidson's later books made a noise in the literary world but brought him little profit. In them he emphasized his belief that Christianity was near its end, and it was upon the great change that this belief involved that he based his poetic visions. For the Christian cosmogony he substituted that of man and science. Being a poet of genius, he breathed life into the terminology of

science; for, like Swinburne, he blew everything to melody through his golden trumpet.

The poet's description of a world without Christianity palpitates with passion:—

I, Mammon, mean to make
This mighty world a hundredfold itself,
There shall be deeper depths of poverty;
A more distressing toil, more warlike war,
An agony of spirit deadlier
Than that which drenched Gethsemane with blood;
A rapture of dominion hitherto
Unfelt by conquerors, kings, or priests; a power,
A beauty, and a glory of the world
Emerged from Christendom, like love's beloved
With April from the wrinkled womb of death,
Delivered fresh to Aphrodite's arms.

Now listen to another passage in which Mammon delivers his message:—

The fanes are ruined, spent,
The adoration that was only fond
Expedient, frantic makeshift for delayed
Self-consciousness in men; the truest creed
Dies like a mollusc when you crack the shell.
Instead of temples I bring the universe;
Instead of creeds I offer you yourselves,
The greatness of the universe become self-conscious
In flames and crimson seas we shall advance
Against the ancient immaterial reign
Of spirit and our watchword shall be still
"Get thee behind me, God; I follow Mammon.

With all its thunder and earthquake, John Davidson's poetry never fails in the sweeter and kindlier note:—

As vibrant as an octave bell that hums
Harmonic mirth to hear his neighbour chime.

There are passages which are very glories of charm and imagination:—

Hush!
The murmur of the seaboard: surges beat
Their slow, uncertain, softly swelling fugue—
The brooding surges fingering the shore.
Life's heavy fruitage and imperial nights
When naked darkness gluts the sky with stars.
As keen as dawn that with a crimson slash
Hews out the darkness and delivers day,
And thunder of the thought shall seem to wait
Upon the nimbler lightning of the deed.

The little child
That lives a year and holds its parents' hearts
In dimpled hands for ever.
High hearts and youth are destiny enough.

It is by means of passages such as these that the reader can see the genius of the poet who found eclogues in the rawness, hugeness, and noise of modern Babylon. As a dramatist, John Davidson was very unlike ordinary playwrights. He regarded Christianity with abhorrence, and he wrote plays with the deliberate object of converting people to his opinions in this matter. He hits the orthodox God hard, and his orthodox worshippers harder. When you read Davidson's *God and Mammon*, for example, you do not greatly care what befalls Prince Mammon or King Christian; what you care for is the beautiful language, oftentimes as resistless as the honeyed perfection of Kit Marlowe. When you think of a really great play you do not think of any single person or passage. The glory of that most perfect tragedy, *Othello*, is neither the Moor, nor Desdemona, nor Iago, but each and all. To recall John Davidson's plays is mainly to think of isolated passages of great charm. His life was a tragedy, deeper than any that he wrote. He possessed literary ability that would have enabled him to make plenty of money had he prostituted his talents. But his mind was set on something higher. He dedicated himself to the service of principles. He was entitled, in his degree, to echo the noble words of

Heine: "Lay a sword upon my coffin, for I was a loyal soldier in the war of the liberation of humanity."

When lion-hearted Richard Carlile was fighting the good fight for Freedom, he was unaware that his deeds of daring were watched by Keats and Shelley, two great poets, both Freethinkers and Republicans, who looked out from their towers of song and recognized that he was a hero battling for the most precious possession of humanity. Nearly a hundred years later, G. W. Foote, fighting bravely in the same good cause, was heartened by the encouragement of George Meredith and John Davidson. It was well and happily done. For the Freethought leaders look beyond the tumult and the shoutings of the day, and are touched by what Shakespeare calls "the prophetic soul of the wide world dreaming on things to come."

MIMNERMUS.

The Bible and Immortality.

THE OLD TESTAMENT—(continued).

As we have seen in the last paper, no mention is made in the Hebrew scriptures of a future life, or of man possessing an internal "something" that will continue to live after the death of the body. We will now examine some of the statements made in those scriptures respecting life, soul, and spirit, in order to see if any of these so-called entities are said or implied to be immortal.

In the Genesis creation story we find the following passages:—

Gen. i. 20.—Let the waters bring forth abundantly the moving creatures that hath *life*.

Gen. i. 24.—Let the earth bring forth.....*beast* of the earth, etc.

Gen. i. 28.—Every *living thing* that moveth upon the earth.

In the foregoing passages the words italicized are in Hebrew all one and the same—the expression "living thing" being merely a revised substitute for "beast." In all three cases the word in the original is *khay-yah*, which means: "life, animal, wild beast."

Having cleared the way, so far, we can now look at the following passage:—

Gen. ii. 7.—And the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the *breath (nish-math)* of life; and man became a living *soul (nephesh)*.

In this passage the words "life" and "living" are the same—*khay-yah*. We have therefore only to consider man's *nish math* and his *nephesh*. This is soon done. Turning to a Hebrew lexicon, we find that the word *nish-math* signifies: "breath, life, a human being, the wind," and is therefore correctly translated "breath"; also, that *nephesh*, which is translated "soul," means: "breath, an animal that breathes, a living person." The latter word (*nephesh*) is further said to be sometimes applied to the feelings, desire, and inclination; but whether this be so or not, it does not affect the primary signification. Hence, in the passage under consideration there cannot be the smallest doubt as to the meaning. Having formed the figure of a man in clay, the Lord God—who was conceived to be a man-shaped being—breathed into the figure his own living breath, whereupon the clay man immediately became a *living, breathing animal*. The story is, of course, pure fiction, like that related of Pygmalion, a celebrated sculptor, whose marble Venus was changed into a living woman. In both stories the internal organs of the figure and its flesh and blood constituents would seem to have never entered the minds of the originators.

In the narrative recording the death of Rachel (who died in childbirth) we find the following statement:—

Gen. xxxv. 18.—And it came to pass, as her *soul* (*nephesh*) was in departing, for she died, that she called his name *Ben-oni*.

In the Hebrew version the literal reading of the passage is: "And it was—in going out her breath—that she died—and she called his name, Son of my pain." In the first of these readings (that of the Revised Version) the word *Ben-oni* is left untranslated. Now, in this case, as in that of the formation and vivifying of the first man, there can be no doubt whatever as to the meaning. This is *not* that an immortal "soul" was leaving the body, but that consciousness and the power to breathe were departing. Rachel spoke with her last breath, and then ceased to live.

We find, furthermore, that the word *nephesh* was applied to the whole animal creation, as well as to human beings, as in the following examples:—

Gen. ix. 16.—The covenant between God and every living *creature* (*nephesh*) upon the earth.

Gen. xlvi. 7.—All the *souls* of the house of Jacob, which came into Egypt, were three score and ten.

In the chapter last quoted, the word *nephesh*, translated "souls," is employed in the plural in the sense of "living persons" (the word "living" being omitted) no less than eight times. The word "soul" thus means nothing more than a *living being*, whether used in reference to man or to one of the lower animals.

We come next to the word "spirit," whose first appearance in the Bible is in Gen. i. 2. In this verse it is stated that "The *spirit* of God moved upon the face of the waters." Here the word "spirit" is *ruakh*, which in the lexicon signifies: "breath, breeze, the wind, spirit." Josephus, in the first paragraph of his *Antiquities*, paraphrases this sentence by saying "and a *wind* moved upon its surface"—which, of course, is correct. With the first three interpretations assigned to *ruakh*—breath, breeze, the wind—we are all familiar; but we do not know what were the ideas of the ancient Hebrew writers in many of the cases which our translators have rendered "spirit." The following are examples in which *ruakh* is found:—

Gen. vi. 17.—I do bring the flood of waters.....to destroy all flesh wherein is the *breath* (*ruakh*) of life.

Gen. viii. 1.—And God made a *wind* (*ruakh*) to pass over the earth.

Job xxvii. 3.—My life is whole in me, and the *spirit* (*ruakh*) of God is in my nostrils.

Gen. vi. 3.—And the Lord said, My *spirit* (*ruakh*) shall not strive with man for ever.

In the third and fourth of these examples the word translated "spirit" means nothing more than "breath." As regards the third passage, a comparison with Gen. ii. 7 (already quoted) will make this evident. Job was speaking of the breath supposed to have been given to him by God at his birth—and, as in the case of the first man, through the nostrils. In the fourth example, the Lord is represented as saying that he had long striven with men by giving them warning, reproof, and exhortation (with his breath); but as these had not been heeded, he would waste no more words upon them, but would destroy them by a flood. Similarly, the word "spirit" in Gen. xli. 38, Job xxvi. 4 and 12, Eccl. iii. 21, and many other passages which I have noticed, can all be resolved into "breath." When, however, neither "breath" nor "wind" appears to give sense to the passage, the word *ruakh* should be rendered "spirit"; but, as I have already stated, this leaves the exact signification uncertain.

In any case, whatever may be the meaning of the word *ruakh* in some places, there is nothing in any of

the passages in which "spirit" is found that refers to any other life than the present; this fact settles the question of immortality in the Old Testament.

As already stated, the most important point in this connection is that upon the question of a future life there is everywhere a complete silence throughout the whole of the Hebrew scriptures, which plainly implies that in the Old Testament times a life after death had never been seriously thought of. So far from "eternal life" having been bestowed upon man, or the promise of it made to him as a reward for serving the tribal God, we find that the lower animals were raised to his level (save in the matter of dominion), and were given the same earthly life, with its attributes of soul and spirit, as their natural possession. And such being the case, it is not in the least surprising to note that nowhere in the Jewish scriptures is it stated, or even implied, that man's life, soul, or spirit shall continue to exist after the body to which it belonged had crumbled into dust. There was, however, to some extent a belief in "spirits of the dead"—which will be fully considered in the next paper.

The ancient Hebrews, as we know, were very ignorant and credulous, and believed many things which we now know to be absurd. They believed, as we have seen, that one of their prophets had been taken up in the air by a whirlwind, which carried him safely to the dwelling-place of the Lord God and his holy angels, who resided just above the clouds. This belief, though pure superstition, is at least comprehensible; for assuming that no such thing as immortality was known, the prophet, if he was to be rewarded for his good works by being taken to heaven, would have to go there before his death, or not at all; and, being alive, he would take with him his soul and spirit, as well as his brain, without which there could be neither soul nor spirit. But to imagine that at death all the qualities, feelings, thoughts, and emotions, which constitute the mind or soul, would arrange themselves into an impalpable, invisible Something whose personality should live for ever—to imagine such an absurdity was beyond even the credulity of the credulous Hebrew writers, and their "conspiracy of silence" upon this subject is a clear proof that they never believed anything so ridiculous. This form of credulity is found only among Christians and Spiritualists of the present day.

We see from Gen. i. 2 and 26 that the Hebrew writers were acquainted with the Egyptian practice of embalming the dead; for the bodies of the patriarchs Jacob and Joseph, who are recorded as dying in Egypt, are stated to have undergone this process, in order, apparently, to prevent disintegration until they could be conveyed to Canaan for burial.

ABRACADABRA.

The City of Dreams.

WHEN I first saw the Thames, it was under a midnight moon. I was alone in London, and free to rove and muse at my own sweet will. That was a decade ago. The river has been flowing steadily since then. Father Thames and Father Time keep even pace, and outlive all other fathers, temporal and spiritual. I have stood by the river in many moods and on many occasions since, but never with the wild, free, rapt, reverent abandon of that first midnight hour. So the far-travelled Hindoo, if with different emotions, might behold the sacred Ganges. To me it was no sacred flood, but symbolical of much. Perhaps I thought first of the very human Thomas Hood and *The Bridge of Sighs*; of Dickens, and his quaint and curious pageant faded. Sympathy, memory, the association of ideas, all the

pathos of history and hopes and fears of the present time, mingled with the broken moonbeam as it lit the ripples of the venerable stream. Such, according to varying psychology, explain the passionate pilgrim and the shrine of his adoration.

There be many shrines, many thrones, much pomp and circumstance, civil and military, secular and religious, deeply rooted in the past, but still superficial and inessential. The permanent and fundamental things are more important, if less imposing. One has in mind the few wise heads, in London and elsewhere; common men of common sense, of simplicity, sincerity, and intelligence; quiet, earnest, unassuming men; exalted, too, but only in ideal and aspiration; advanced, also, some five hundred years ahead of their generation. These are the true legislators, and compared with whom our civil, military, and ecclesiastical grandees are but painted savages.

* * * *

On this, my latest, visit to London, I saw that chivalrous knight and "bonnie fechter" for freethought, Mr. —. But, no; let him still be "Mimnermus the Mysterious," and charm us incognita with the magic of his pen. Older readers may remember, in the early Stevenson days, the *Young Folks' Paper*, that used to issue from Red Lion Court. How we used to thrill at the exploits of that knight in shining armour, Don Zalva the Brave, of Selim the Moor, the Young Swordsman of Warsaw, Desdichado, Chiron the Charioteer, etc., all by that voluminous author, Alfred R. Phillips. These great serials are still running in the painted "comics" that now issue from the same Court. Our boys read them still, and why should we forbid them? We can but hope they will follow on, and ultimately find their more modern heroes in the pages of the *Freethinker*.

I spent a most delightful hour in the quiet old Temple Gardens, Inns of Court, etc., with our Chief of Staff as guide, philosopher, and friend. No small honour, surely. It may even seem boastful; but I cannot help that. The marble effigy of Oliver Goldsmith, over his quiet, shady tomb, seemed to await our coming. We spoke of that uneful, simple, generous soul, who was "nobody's enemy but his own." We leaned over the prostrate bronze of the Knights Templars, some with legs crossed to show that they had been to the Holy City, and who, my guide facetiously remarked, were perhaps performing a more useful purpose thus supine and still than they had ever performed in life. The remarkably beautiful interior of the little church of the Crusades period called forth our unstinted admiration, and I am creditably informed the musical services held here are the finest of their kind. In Fleet Street we passed the Temple Bar, which now only exists as a side snow in gilt miniature. A winged effigy in stone, however, has taken the place of the older obstruction.

Later, and still greatly daring, or merely devoted, I saw the affable and energetic manager of the R.P.A., Mr. Charles Watts, and for old time's sake visited Red Lion Court, and Pitman's, at Amen Corner, in the shadow of St. Paul's. Thence to Euston, for the North. Experienced a "midnight alarm," and just left as our friends from Germany arrived. This last was mere nightmare, all the rest a vision of hope and peace and sanity. It was but yesterday, but already it is a memory and a dream. Great old London has hummed itself to repose, and Father Thames flows on for ever "through the mist and shadow of sleep." The City of Dreams will wake to life again when I return.....The wind is rustling softly in the trees beside a quiet road.....It is night, and the household has retired to rest. The fire is smouldering low; the pipe of nutty flavour forgets to burn; the wind growls distantly aloft in the chimney,

and more familiarly at the window-pane, and then goes hurrying on, sounding hollowly across the plain.....I have an idea: the world might be saved by simple, honest, and intelligent men. The Bismarcks, Wellingtons, Napoleons, have failed—the War Lord and the Prince of Peace. The normal man is the saviour of the world.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Immortality—A Narcotic.

THE Rev. Dr. Norman Maclean, of St. Cuthbert's Church, Edinburgh, is one of Scotland's outstanding preachers, and one whose teaching is followed by many. In an address, which he recently delivered in Edinburgh at a war-time service, he remarked that the "great doctrine of immortality was presented in these days in a coarse and material form, as if it were a narcotic that ought to reconcile us to the horrors of war; and that nothing sadder had happened in the world than the way people had become indifferent to the great truth of immortality."

It is a striking fact that it should be found necessary in these times to defend the doctrine of immortality, as if it were recognized that it was being heavily assailed; for, with primitive barbarism in the ascendant, it would be but natural that primitive superstition should spring up with renewed life. When hopes are dashed to the ground, the stars in their courses fight against man, loved ones fall, and aching voids are created in the heart, it would not be surprising were large numbers of people, who were normally indifferent, to adhere to a belief which promised reparation for ills and reunion with friends. Yet here we have the confession of an eminent divine that nothing sadder had happened than the indifference of the people.

It exemplifies the peculiar attitude of mind developed by theological training that indifference to a doctrine, the interpretations of which have filled many books, should be considered sad beyond all this murder, glorified by the name of war; sad beyond the shame of that intellectual paucity which has rendered international arbitration impossible; sad beyond man's ignorance of man. No stronger condemnation of religion as a factor in social welfare has been admitted than this, that it so warps a man's judgment that slavery, pillage, rapine, and murder are as nothing compared with a disbelief in a doctrine.

Dr. Maclean's statements form a serious indictment. They charge some persons with having, for ulterior purposes, taken a despicable advantage of the nation's predicament to present the doctrine of immortality as a narcotic.

Freethinkers have not used this doctrine as a narcotic, in fact, they have offered the antidote. The indictment not having been framed against them, who then are the culprits? Obviously it must be ministers of religion. It is indicative of the use to which parsons put the misfortunes of women, that a preacher of so outstanding ability as Dr. Maclean should reprove them. It is doubtful if there is any body of men, except priests, who would seize on the private misfortunes of a man or woman, with the rapacity of a tiger tearing out the entrails of its prey, and seek to profit thereby. For is it not profit? Do they not make their livelihood out of the gullibility of the people? Do they not label as criminal or indecent all those who will not pay tribute to them? Where abuse fails, and threats of eternal torture are unheeded, do they not seek to have the rights of citizenship withheld? Think of Spinoza, Paine, Carfile, Servetus, and Bruno; think of de

Heretico Comburendo and the revocation of the Edict of Nantes; think of the fires of Smithfield and the extermination of the Waldenses, and say that the tiger has not been outdone. And were not these things done that the immortal soul might be saved?

We recently attended the funeral of a dear friend. The parson who officiated bade us be of good cheer, that our friend only slept, and that in his very flesh should we see him again. This was scriptural, and it was refreshing to hear a parson speak with some regard for what was laid down in the Bible. Was not this a narcotic? Justifiable in the circumstances—perhaps, but, nevertheless, a narcotic.

It is when dealing with social matters that the grave danger of the doctrine of immortality is discovered. There are many who bow to the will of God; who feel that all effort to better life is not only vain, but sin; who, when told that the proletariat require to work longer hours than is really necessary, reply that man must live by the sweat of his brow; who uncomplainingly suffer the indignities of poverty because it is written that the poor shall be always with us and are blessed; and these reply thus because they believe in a future life.

The difference between a "truth" and a "great truth" is a theological subtlety which we have never comprehended; but we have formed a tentative opinion that a great truth is something about which nothing is known. So far as immortality is concerned, we have found no evidence to support it. Were mankind to recognize that the idea of immortality is a figment of the dawning intelligence of humanity, and that life gone, is the candle extinguished, so soon would it set out to put the world to rights. Were that energy which is wasted in logomachy, that thought concentrated on religion, that organization defending superstition, and that teaching spreading ignorance, to be taken from these useless and harmful pursuits, and combined to elucidate the causes of world misery, how soon would progress be made!

The doctrine of immortality is indeed a narcotic—a dangerous narcotic.

JOHN McMILLAN.

Acid Drops.

The debate in the House of Lords on the sale of "honours" contained nothing of which well-informed people were not aware. We do not see how one party can well blame the other, since all are guilty. And the thing is so flagrant that no one had the hardihood to deny it. A clear way out of the difficulty would be to abolish these absurd titles altogether, with the pantomimic and semi-barbaric accessories. But that would be too drastic a step for the British public; and so we would suggest that, instead of passing resolutions against the sale of titles—resolutions which will be useless when passed—there should be a regular and recognized scale of charges, from a dukedom to a knighthood. Anyone who wanted a title could then have one—if he could pay the price. And we are certain that, even under those conditions, the British public would furnish plenty of purchasers. We have to travel a long way yet before the servility of spirit which gives a mere title importance is sufficiently weakened to divest it of value.

The *Universe*, the weekly Catholic newspaper, has an interesting note concerning priests. It says: "In this War, for the first time, the Navy has provided Catholic chaplains not only at the naval bases, but also in the sea-going squadrons." It would be interesting to learn what the cost of the numerous chaplains attached to the Army and Navy amounts to during the present War.

The pill of religion has to be heavily coated with sugar nowadays. At a recent Presbyterian Church's Sunday

meeting at Westcliff-on-Sea, solos were rendered by a lady-singer, selections were given by an orchestra, and trombone solos were indulged in. An address was given by an Army chaplain, in which he said that "outside the hospital, he was a mixture of Whiteley's and Lyons."

Mr. Silas K. Hocking, a former Free Church minister, complains "that Sectarianism has not been kept out of the camps. I wish it had been otherwise. I stood at the door of a (Y.M.C.A.) hut the other day and looked about me. A little to the right was a "Church Army Hut," to the left a "Salvation Army Hut," and I had passed a "Wesleyan Hut" on the way.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, who is a Spiritualist, says that "Reports are agreed as to the pleasant conditions of life beyond the grave." Kind-hearted Christians will notice, with alarm, that this puts the lid on hell.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle says there is no reason why an angel "could speak to Jews in Judæa and not to Englishmen in England." Why limit the speech to angels? In the Bible days Balaam's ass was as loquacious as the snake in Eden.

Munition workers must be in a bad way. We wonder why? Recently there was the much-advertised Woolwich Crusade for the Moral and Spiritual Betterment of the Munition Workers. That was a dead failure, from the religious point of view, at least, and now Canon Baillie is appealing for £150,000 to meet the "spiritual needs" of Worcester munition workers. Observe, it is not the munition workers who ask for the help, but the Canon. The money must be spent through the Church. One day we hope to see people generally resent the impertinence of the clergy in thus posing as moral regenerators.

The Prime Minister, who is a Welsh Baptist, has been ingratiating himself with the clergy, and recently entertained a large number of parsons of all denominations at breakfast at Downing Street. The obsequious press made as much fuss as if it had been reporting the Last Supper.

The discussion on "Spiritualism and Life After Death" is still running merrily in the *Sunday Times*, and Spiritualists have sought to make capital of the adhesion of Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir William Barrett, principally because they are scientists. Mr. Nevil Maskelyne, who has had thirty years acquaintance with spiritualistic phenomena, says it is largely a matter of sense deception. "Professed scientists," he adds, "as a rule, have no such knowledge. I very much doubt if Sir Oliver Lodge, for example, even knows there is such a thing as a theory of magic."

"Faith is the only panacea for human woes," says Mr. Bottomley. Indeed! Is it a little thing that grown men and women should have faith in plaster images?

Mr. H. A. L. Fisher, President of the Board of Education, said "the education rate should be the most popular in the country." Unfortunately, so many Nonconformists regard the education rate as being little better than a Church rate.

"The bishops enjoy enormous influence at the Foreign Office," says Mr. E. Ashmead-Bartlett. Now we know who is responsible for Britain being a Continental Power.

According to the *Sunday Times*, the Bishop of London says "a man is much the same five minutes after death, as he was five minutes before." It is, however, a difficult matter to persuade the man's relatives that this is the case, in spite of the Bishop's dictum.

"The Church of England has hitherto been more intensive than diffused," said the Rev. Dr. Chilton, the clerical headmaster of the City of London School. The same thing may be said of the wealth of the Church, for the Bench of Bishops enjoy the lion's share of emoluments.

Reactionaries everywhere are trying to take advantage of the national crisis to further their own ends. Among others, Sabbatarians have been active with prosecutions of their more broad-minded fellow-citizens; but, happily, they do not always win their cases. At Grimsby, a soldier was charged with buying cigarettes on Sunday. When before the magistrates, the soldier said that he had to fight on Sundays, and the Bench at once dismissed the case.

Ecclesiastics appear to be imitating theatrical folk in the use of press notices. A short time since a quarter-column announcement appeared in the press extolling the bravery of Cardinal Bourne during a visit of some days to France. The Cardinal's most courageous acts seem to be those of lunching at General Headquarters and visiting the King of the Belgians.

The present can hardly be described as an age of robust faith. The shrine of Saint Edward the Confessor, in Westminster Abbey, is "hidden by a huge pyramid of sandbags built up to protect it from possible destruction in an air-raid." Fancy a "saint" needing the protection of sandbags!

The *Herald Republican* (U.S.A.) has a full-page article on a new translation of the Bible. The translation seems a very convenient one: "Thou shall not kill," being rather an awkward command at the present moment, the new reading has "Thou shalt not murder." Many having stumbled over "Behold a virgin shall conceive and bear a child," the new version meets the objection with "Behold, the young woman," etc. This is a most comfortable method of translating. All you have to do is to find out what is required and translate accordingly. We shall expect to see presently a verse translated which makes the "great fish" in which Jonah took his memorable voyage into a "submarine." The possibilities of this method are infinite.

Mr. G. K. Chesterton has written *A Short History of England*. He says the most important thing that happened in the Victorian era "was that nothing happened." Mr. Chesterton is as accurate as the writers of the Gospels.

The Ven. Archdeacon Holmes, preaching at St. Paul's Cathedral, told the congregation, "Satan is not God." Indeed! But, as the schoolboy said, "Why don't God kill the Devil?"

A new publication has the title, *A Young Eve and an Old Adam*. The Bible Adam is said to have lived 960 years; but he had the advantage of starting life at full age.

A series of articles by a "Jewish Catholic" have been published in the *Universe*. We have heard of "Chinese Presbyterians," but this latest combination makes us wonder.

The *Westminster Gazette* recently published a protest against compulsory church parades in the Army, and pointed out that "we do not attempt to force attendance at religious services on any other branch of Government servants except the fighting forces." A palpable hit! The protest, however, might have been made some years earlier.

"A debate on the question, 'Where do the clergy fail?' took place a day or two ago at the Base Hospital in connection with the 5th Northern General Hospital Debating Society. Lieut. M. E. Golby (the Queen's) presided. The opener, Lieut. Dick Fletcher (27th Canadians) made a breezy speech, in which he brought forward twelve reasons for the clergy's failure. Lieut. N. E. Carden (K.O.Y.L.I.) replied, and this was followed by a number of short speeches by the R.A.M.C. Company and patients, together with a vigorous defence of the clergy by Capt. the Rev. C. F. Stevens, C.F. After brief replies by the opener and opposer, and a summing up by the chairman, a vote was taken as to whether the clergy do fail, and by a majority of 22 the meeting agreed that they did!"—*Leicester Daily Mercury*.

General Smuts says: "The longer people keep cheerful faces, the quicker the war will be over." Unfortunately, so many Christian folk habitually wear an expression of tired funeral horses.

The *Catholic Review* contains an article by Captain H. N. Gibson on Spiritualism, under the title of "The Direct Attack." The writer sets himself to show that Spiritism is a frontal attack by the Devil on Christianity. Evidently the world-war has roused Satan from his slumber.

A beggar who, it was said, could make tears roll down his cheeks at will, was charged with begging at Thames Police Court. This is not so remarkable as the story of the stone statue in a church which wept on high and holy occasions. Probably, the priest who handled the water-can could explain how the trick was done.

"As an expression of sympathy with sufferers from air raids, the Bishop of Dover has promised to sleep at Ramsgate on a moonlight night and share the anxieties of the population." So runs a paragraph in the *Daily News*; and we are really astounded at such heroism. But we wonder where the Bishop will sleep? Will it be in one of the poorer sort of houses likely to be shaken down by the explosion of a bomb? And why one night? Why not sleep there altogether? And we wonder whether the people of Ramsgate really will be comforted by knowing that a real Bishop is in their midst? The curious thing is that the Bishop does not say he will pray for the people. Perhaps that is taken for granted. Perhaps not.

We have many times referred to the way in which religious organizations are utilized to back up vested interests. We see from the *Call* for November 1 that in one military camp all men in uniform are prohibited attending political or Trades Union meetings. This we can quite understand. The curious thing is that in the same camp meetings are being held in the Y.M.C.A. huts on "The Abolition of Trades Unions."

Mr. Horatio Bottomley says that he speaks "with all the humility of a layman." If he were proud he could hardly make more noise.

What beautiful nonsense gets into prints! Mr. James Douglas writes: "Perhaps we are over-educated and over-civilized." Not yet, Mr. Douglas! Not whilst children leave school at fourteen years of age; nor whilst families reside in single and two-room tenements.

Theosophy seems to be as much a nose of wax as the Christian religion. Many years ago, when Mrs. Besant embraced Theosophy, she dropped all her social and political work because it conflicted with her new opinions. To-day, she takes a vast interest in Indian politics, and has been interned for her activity. The mighty Mahatmas seem powerless before a handful of policemen.

THE SUBMARINE.

Clarence:

O Lord! methought what pain it was to drown!
 What dreadful noise of water in mine ears!
 What sights of ugly death within mine eyes!
 Methought I saw a thousand fearful wrecks;
 A thousand men that fishes gnaw'd upon;
 Wedges of gold, great anchors, heaps of pearl,
 Inestimable stones, unvalu'd jewels,
 All scatter'd in the bottom of the sea:
 Some lay in dead men's skulls; and in those holes
 Where eyes did once inhabit there were crept,—
 As 'twere in scorn of eyes,—reflecting gems,
 That woo'd the slimy bottom of the deep,
 And mock'd the dead bones that lay scatter'd by.

—King Richard III., Act. I., scene iv.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

November 18, Birmingham; November 25, Nuneaton; December, 2, South Shields; December 9, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—November 18, Manchester; November 11, Glasgow; November 12, Falkirk.

W. DEAN.—Thanks for offer, which we shall be pleased to accept.

H. BLACK.—Mr. Cohen's *Determinism or Free Will?* is out of print at the moment, but it will be reprinted at as early a date as possible.

R. L. (Southport).—Shall be pleased to see you when you come to London. But please advise us as to the day and time of calling at this office.

G. T. BOWMAN.—We are also hopeful of pulling through without having to make any alteration in either the size or price of the *Freethinker*. We note your appreciation of the "varied and satisfying menu" provided.

MR. F. C. HOLDEN (Utah, U.S.A.) writes: "Leaflets on the 'Massacre of the Innocents' have arrived, and caused many an eye-opener amongst the intellectually lazy people in this pious community." Very pleased to hear it.

J. L.—We are taking no risks. Our information comes from several sources, and is as authoritative as it can well be.

S. CLOWES.—Thanks for news. It is a common policy to leave untold things we ought to know, assuming that others will be sure to tell us. But it is a mistake. Better be told twice than not at all.

A. R. D.—Your appreciation is very encouraging.

M. W.—Arrived too late for notice.

T. H. E.—Received. Pleased to hear from you.

H. G. MARSHALL.—We note that you succeeded in getting one letter, on the right lines, into the *Star* correspondence on the Zeppelins and God. Our comments referred, of course, to the disproportion of space allotted to the two sides of the controversy.

H. ROSETTI.—Capital! It is a bit of practical and valuable work.

E. PINDER.—Thanks for cutting. But the clergy seldom profit by open discussion, do they?

CPL. J. BENTON.—If parsons will come round the camp lecturing the men on religion, they ought not to resent questions being asked and opposition offered. Anyway, we are pleased to know that you offered both. It is not surprising the parson did not like your opposition. The clergy prefer silence. Then they can return with a story of how eagerly the men listened, etc.

G. CROOKSON.—We are very pleased to hear from you, and we remember you quite well, in spite of the lapse of time. Will bear your suggestions in mind.

R. V.—We do not think we were unfair to the *Star*. We admit that the *Star* is more liberal than our other London papers, but our remarks referred to the space allotted to the Freethought side of the question.

D. GLOAT.—Next week.

ARTHUR DANNATT.—Order, with remittance, received, but address for despatch of book is lacking. Please send it on.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

Some time ago we asked the upholders of Secular Education to get their Trades Unions, etc., to pass resolutions in favour of this policy. We were pleased to observe that several had taken our advice, and we have just received notice of the following, passed at the instance of the West Ham Branch of the Operative Bricklayers' Society, at the General Meeting of West Ham and District Trades and Labour Council on October 31:—

That in the interests of education, and as a means of preventing the obstruction of educational progress by what is known as the "religious question," this West Ham Branch, Operative Bricklayers' Society, is of opinion that education in State schools should be strictly confined to the subjects defined as "secular" in the Education Code, thus maintaining an attitude of complete neutrality towards all questions of religious belief or doctrine.

It was also agreed to send the motion to all Trades Councils in England, to Mr. Fisher, and to the local M.P.'s. This is capital work, and we hope Freethinkers in all parts of the country will see what they can do in the same direction.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (November 11) in the City Hall, Glasgow. The lectures are at 12 o'clock and 6.30. We hope that Glasgow Freethinkers will see to it that the hall is crowded on both occasions.

We have more than once referred to the impression we have as to South Wales being a most favourable ground for Freethought work. It was something to start a Branch of the N. S. S. at Swansea, one of the strongholds of Welsh Dissent, and we are hoping to see something done at Cardiff soon. Mr. Cohen's visit to Abertillery last Sunday showed what is possible. The hall was filled in the afternoon and crowded out in the evening. Many of the audience did a long tramp over the mountains in order to be present, and the number of keen-faced, intelligent-looking young men present gave excellent promise for the future.

This Sunday Mr. Cohen is not lecturing, but on the following Sunday (November 18) he lectures in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham. On the following Sunday he breaks new ground at Nuneaton. From all we hear the meetings there are likely to rouse considerable interest.

Pte J. Scott writes *apropos* of our remarks, in the *Freethinker* of October 28, on Mr. Bottomley's foolish exploitation of "the miracle of the Virgin at Albert":—

I am on sick furlough and just out of hospital. I have just received my *Freethinker* and was glancing through it when my eye caught the assumption from *John Bull* in "Acid Drops" about the beaming "Madonna and Child of the Albert Cathedral." Now, Sir, I have been right along the whole front, from Ypres to Albert and Albert to Ypres front—participating in the fighting all along.

Mr. Bottomley, Sir, is indeed very gullible, but you hit the mark when you say the British officer was pulling Mr. Bottomley's leg. The Monument of the Madonna was not knocked into its present beaming position by a German shell.... Had Mr. Bottomley used his eyes as well as his superstitious mind, he would have seen several high chimney stalks. They also had not been hit, yet everything round about was ruin and desolation. These stalks were left alone for the same purpose as the Cathedral with the beaming Madonna and Child, and were just a gunnery direction for the enemy.... If Mr. Bottomley had spent the time under the conditions at the Somme as I have, perhaps he would not be so superstitious. Mr. Bottomley would then have seen graves of brave men with crosses at their heads and Madonnas on their graves. Yet the cross or the Madonna did not prevent a German shell from turning up body after body that had been laid to rest, perhaps a few days since, perhaps months. If he had to gather up the parts of the maimed bodies of those dead men in a waterproof sheet, as I have done, and think of their wives and mothers and children, he would talk less about the glory of war; if he had to stand up to his middle in water for six nights in a shell hole in "No Man's Land" and be frozen in every morning in that shell hole, and

be continually under shell fire; if he saw his chums blown to pieces before his eyes, and men lying huddled in heaps dead in shell holes and had laid there for months; if Mr. Bottomley had the real experience of war, perhaps his pen then would not be controlled by his passions or emotions, though he might wonder what the Hell his God is doing. That is a common expression from the soldier's lips in France to-day. Mr. Bottomley, Sir, to use a soldier's phrase, has opened his mouth and let it say what it liked.

We have left out Mr. Scott's account of the cause of the present position of the statue, which we said we knew, and which Mr. Bottomley must know, because we think it lies with him to tell the truth to his readers. At any rate, we give him the opportunity of doing so.

Mr. B. Siger writes:—

My son in Salonica writes to say that the *Freethinker* is eagerly read by many of his chums who, at the beginning of the War, laughed at him for reading it. He says he enjoys it more every week, and is quite disappointed when he does not get it through some accident in transit.

This is good but not unusual news. We are convinced, and we have the best of reasons for saying it, that owing to the number of copies read among the troops and the way it is passed round, the *Freethinker* is at present doing a greater propagandist work than it has ever done in its history. Owing to the War, hundreds read the paper who, under ordinary conditions, would never have seen it.

A definite arrangement has now been reached with compositors regarding an additional war bonus. This is to be 4s. a week per man, dating from November 1, and 6s. per week dating from January 1. What with continuous increases in the wages bill and a steady rise in the price of materials, running a paper in War can scarcely be called a humdrum occupation.

The best way of meeting this continuously increasing expense is by pushing the circulation of the *Freethinker* wherever possible; and we are seeing what can be done by a little judicious advertising in local newspapers. One day we hope to embark on a comprehensive advertising scheme; at present, for financial and other reasons, we are forced to move very cautiously. But our experience is, so far, that well-planned advertising always pays.

We beg to remind all intending subscribers to the Sustentation Fund that the closing date is November 20. This will enable the last list of subscriptions to be published in the issue dated November 25.

Mr. R. Chapman writes: "Having arranged with Mr. Cohen for Sunday, December 2, the South Shields Branch is filling in the interval with local talent. Last Sunday, Mr. J. Fothergill opened an interesting discussion on 'The Two Paths,' and Mr. J. Hannan presided over a good meeting. Next week (Nov. 18) the subject is a report of the London Interim Conference, and the separation and divorce question section will undoubtedly prove a centre of controversy, friendly even where antagonistic."

The *R. P. A. Annual* is, this year, raised to one shilling, which, considering the greatly increased cost of production, is not surprising. And no one who lays out a shilling on it will regret the expenditure. Mr. Eden Phillpotts is in his best poetic vein in the "The Rationalists," and Professor Gilbert Murray contributes a cleverly subtle essay on "The Essence of Christianity." It is an essay which destroys Christianity in the act of demonstrating its real character. Professor Bury writes on "Christianity and Roman Criminal Law," and shows what little it was that Christianity added to this department of sociology, while hinting at the ill it did in checking certain developments already at work. Mr. McCabe has written upon the subject of Christianity in Russia, and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner dwells on the importance of the recently decided Bowman Case. But the great significance of this decision is, to us, not that it established the legality of a bequest to an incor-

porated body, such as the Secular Society, Limited, but that it established the legality of a bequest to any Secular Society whether registered or not. An article by Mr. C. T. Gorham, on "The World after the War," the optimism of which will, we hope, be justified by results, concludes the issue, which contains other articles of an almost equally interesting nature with those noted.

Freethinkers in the Army in Egypt are keeping the (Free-thought) ball rolling. In the *Egyptian Mail* a discussion on religion has been proceeding, and there is a long letter in a recent issue from "J. J. B.," one of our subscribers, who puts the case against Old Testament teaching with much force.

The *Ardoxan Herald* is a paper much nearer this office in which a discussion is being carried on by Freethinkers and Christians. The special subject here is "Beethoven's Religion"; and we observe letters, well written and to the point, from quite a number of heretics. We are always glad to see these discussions in progress, and also to find that some editors have a due sense of their responsibility to all sections of the community.

Messrs. Funk & Wagnells publish a useful little *Dictionary of Grammar* by an American Freethinker, Mr. J. A. Hennesy, which appears designed to meet the needs of the busy person. It is a small pocket volume, price 35 cents, and a noticeable feature is the number of illustrative passages from writers such as Thomas Paine, Ingersoll, etc. We are glad to observe the author's silent protest against a number of slang Americanisms which are making headway among writers on this side the Atlantic.

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

Ninth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £330 7s. 11d. Pte. J. Scott, 2s. 6d. J. Latham, £1. H. Densham, 1s. E. Garard, 2s. B. Versey, 1s. W. Barton, 2s. E. and A. Bullock, 6s. H. Russell Phillips, 10s. T. Garstang, 1s. G. H., 5s. W. J. Micklethwaite, 5s. E. Taylor, 3s. J. A. Morris, 2s. C. J. Peacock, £2 2s. Total, £335 9s. 5d.

This Fund closes on November 20.

Impressions.

CHILDREN can be safely trusted to say the unexpected, and, generally, it is the unexpected which is true. The significant story, where a naked king walks the streets surrounded by flatterers, will illustrate our point. Sometimes the unexpected is the obvious, and sometimes the obvious is not true. Yet, *mes amis*, truth is a strange bird; a fleeting vision of the flash of a kingfisher's colours in the sunlight is, perhaps, as near to absolute truth as mortals may attain.

Winchester is one of the most beautiful cities in the world. It has some of the strange beauty of a sorcerer; it has also some qualities which are downright English; finally, it possesses some aspects which are repellant. We hope we shall not incur the charge of being a disgruntled Freethinker if we attempt to justify our last assertion. Once again, *mes amis*, we dissatisfied ones are hard to satisfy, and, if we flaunt our likes and desires to the four corners of the earth, we shall also give adequate reasons for disliking those matters which pass muster with the easy-going fat-headed public. It is our penalty to see *through* the eye, and not with it.

Autumn was singing its swan-song on a lovely day in October. A blue sky, with Jove's cattle scattered across it, the sun making rainbow colours in running

water, leaves with colours of delicious green, yellow, and brown, dog-rose berries, mountain-ash berries looking red and fierce in contrast, purple elderberries, and the useful sloe, orchards with rosy apples in profusion; this was our first impression of Winchester. We had forgotten, for the time being, the Cathedral. As a tribute to man's labour this edifice is magnificent; as a mark of anything else, it is as naked as the king whom we have mentioned. Man's ingenuity, man's vision of beauty in this "frozen music," as Schopenhauer's phrase has it, is wonderful, and a thing of perpetual delight. The priests say it is dedicated to God, and we must make no mistake about the intense subtlety of this suggestion. Three parts out of four of our countrymen are fed on assertion. It is the old story of defence by attack, and none know the method better than the members of organized religion. Assert! Assert! Assert! Do not bother about explanations, they will look after themselves, and if you can only tell mankind often enough that it is a sinner there is every chance of it being believed. For the moment we are not concerned with the history of Winchester Cathedral. Sufficient for our purpose it is to know that it was built by human hands, and the design emanated from the human brain. It is also safe to say that leisure in that time was the rule and not the exception; furthermore, as history painfully states, the times were extremely superstitious. In the light of present-day revelations the point is not worth labouring. Therefore, it would be an easy matter to impose this assertion that the Cathedral was dedicated to God *with the virtual ownership in the hands of those who made that assertion*. In this way is the labour of man perverted, and a beautiful human place (since human hands have made it) dedicated to God. It is the assertion *Gloria in excelsis*.

Yes, it was quite possible for us to wander round the massive pillars, to note the many superb arches, the sunlight falling in slanting rays on to the carved oak pews—it was quite possible to do this without the slightest reverence to anyone but those who were dead and gone. Dead hands that had fashioned the stone to curves and spirals, cherubs' heads and dragons' tails; hands that had carved out of oak so many lovely patterns; these all spoke of simple tastes. The oak leaf, the head of wheat, with here and there a trace of a design from the honeysuckle or a sea-shell; these were the outward and visible signs of a simple taste in life to which we shall have to return. There was one little matter we noted indicating an absence of the fitness of things. A tablet erected to the memory of a man bore the inscription after the name: "Angler, author, and traveller." Two lines of doggerel followed in praise of angling in which the name of God was mentioned as having been the creator of the piscatorial art for the benefit of man. We smiled and passed on. Byron wrote to the point about angling:—

And angling, too, that solitary vice,
Whatever Izaak Walton sings or says:
The quaint, old, cruel coxcomb, in his gullet
Should have a hook, and a small trout to pull it.

Well, well; we thought they might leave angling as a doubtful sport without attributing it as a gift from the Almighty; but everyone to their taste, as the old lady said when she kissed the cow.

Reader, have you ever been in prison? Have you ever slept on planks, partaken of plain diet, and been alone with your own thoughts? When the gates open for you, does not the wind through the trees sing a melody sweeter than the tongues of nightingales? Every blade of grass seems to greet you. Flowers, like many wondrous coloured stars on earth smile at you, and the touch of a loving human hand completes the change.

From Winchester to the village of St. Cross is a short distance. If you turn to your right from the statue of King Alfred, you may walk by the side of a clear stream until you reach one of the prettiest villages in England. Quaint, old-fashioned cottages seem to grow out of the roads and fields. You will find, even in October, that roses still laugh over the doorways; our best wish to you is that you shall feel the beauty of many a peaceful scene that is to be found between the arrogant and lordly Winchester and the meek little village of St. Cross, where custom hath it, that the good folk wash their linen every Monday. The church is approached through a large courtyard with cloisters on the left, and there is an old-world atmosphere surrounding the place. The interior lacked the magnificence of Winchester Cathedral, but what caught our eye was a facsimile of the document on which is recorded the surrendering of a Charter by a body of men to a bishop! We would give our ears or a shilling for a true record of the transaction. When we remember how dearly a Secular Charter has been bought.....

But there, we set out to register a few impressions. Winchester is a place knee-deep in power and privilege, living on the past, and, needless to say, it is ecclesiastical. You will find great houses with vast lawns and gardens surrounded with walls higher than a pulpit. On the top of the walls you will see broken glass set in an irregular fashion in cement. By our boots we swear that there must be peach and apricot trees the other side. Brick walls and broken glass! God save us gentlemen! the trade of religion is a profitable one from buildings dedicated to God and constructed by human hands. The ramparts of this profession are brick walls and broken glass along with the usual supply of black magic. When you and I have passed to the great beyond (if we may be prophetic) probably a little child will say: "Why, they are not wearing any clothes!" Is this too mystical, too obscure, my readers? We think we can hear you say No. We are a goodly few now; some day we shall be "a people."

Joan says she likes Winchester apples very much; Ellen declares that the folk are good-hearted and kind, though inclined to be narrow; whilst we think that the wood carvings under the choir seats in the Cathedral tell some pretty stories.

WILLIAM REPTON.

Religion in Madeira.

THE "Catholics" of this unfortunate land continue, with revolting unconsciousness, making feasts to the whole caste of saints that the criminal and inventive imagination of the Church has created.

They spend rivers of money without any kind of usefulness whatever, when there are so many unfortunates falling with hunger in these streets, and so much misery within the huts that these poor wretches "inhabit"!

It grieves us to the heart to see, day by day, in this city, unfortunate mothers, surrounded by rickety children, dressed in rags that badly cover their flesh, extending their hands to public charity, which, already worn out, is unable to relieve them.

There they go, the poor and unhappy mothers; out in the streets, bewailing their misfortune and cursing the niggard fate that proportions to some all the commodities and comforts, and gives to the others, to the great, immense, majority, only misery and pain!

Meanwhile, the Church dressed itself up with galas and flowers, while within the temple are clouds of incense mixed with bad Latin, stinking of mouldiness; outside, the people are writhing in convulsions of agony, and dying without a

protest that may shake their tormenters, they may frighten those that insult them in their infinite misery!

Only hardened characters can have no pity for these unfortunates! Only low creatures that treat these poor wretches with contempt can assist at those religious feasts without a phrase of revolt on their lips against this corrupt Church that sacrifices everything to its brightness, as the most base prostitute sacrifices everything to luxury and pleasure!

Traffickers of the Christ and the Virgin, monopolizers of consciences, robbers of their fellow-creatures' pockets, any and every method serves to fill up their coffers and to attain their own ends.

What does it matter that misery might enter millions of homes, that women and children might die of hunger, if to them, to the padres and their followers, nothing is wanting, because in the shadow of Christ and the Church they are exploring the great mine¹ that is the belief of the fanatics of the unfortunate land?

Dastards! Hired assassins of Torquemada and Loyola, putrid excrescence of the worst in the human race, you might, if you wished, do so much good!

It is in your hands to alleviate many pains, much unhappiness! You well know it; yet, nevertheless, you do nothing in that direction.

It is because there does not beat in you a heart that feels and suffers the pains of your fellow-being, but a heart of an insatiable and voracious vulture.

It is satiated, bandits, for the time being! When the people of my land, instructed and conscious of your power, make amends for your lies and trickery, they will go for you with gun and knife, as one does to the foxes that come down on the villages.

Yes! When they day of liberty dawns, when the people of Madeira know how to read, you, oh! sinister cassocks, will have to hold the hoe, or go and work amongst the coal—employment, this, that is in harmony with your black conscience—then, when your "industry" will no longer be "profitable."

Hawkers of the Temple, for whom religion serves only as a business, your hour will strike! As the proverb says: "There is no good that always endures, nor bad that always lasts." This saying, which is applied to you, must be once more complied with. We, and if it be not for us, then our children, must assist in the "debacle" of your well-paying "industry," and the demolition of that home of bestialization and fanaticism, the Church, where is taught only the practice of lying, of vice, and of hypocrisy, and to plant in its place, splendid and radiant, the Temple of Love, of order, and work—the school—where only is taught the practice of Good, of Virtue, and Love of Truth!—Translated from *Work and Union* (Funchal) by

REMIAP.

Correspondence.

GOD AND THE WAR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I have to thank Mr. Lloyd very cordially for his courteous reply, in the *Freethinker* of October 28, to my letter.

I quite agree with him that a Supreme Being has nothing to do with the War. So far as can be judged, no one could have exercised a stricter neutrality nor a more sublime indifference to the War than God has done.

(1) In his reply Mr. Lloyd admits that, in his opinion, the struggle for existence will never be abolished. The struggle for existence is essentially a fight for food for oneself and one's dependents. It may, of course, have other phases than war. It may take, and does take, the form of competition for commercial and industrial supremacy, the capture of foreign markets, etc. With all deference to what Mr. Lloyd has said, his hope of a "reorganization of society on the basis of security, equality, brotherhood, and universal goodwill, when we shall be able to clasp one another's hands and look into one another's eyes as members of a happy family animated and governed by the royal law of love," while, as he admits,

¹ Evidently meaning hell.

the struggle for existence inevitably goes on, and we are busily engaged fighting one another for food, is a condition of matters which though undoubtedly highly desirable, is not at all likely to be realized. Indeed, as populations increase, the struggle in one form or another seems likely to become more intense and ruthless.

(2) Mr. Lloyd uses the term "Christianity" not as meaning the teaching of the Founder of Christianity, but as the teaching and practice of the Church nominally Christian. In that sense, Christianity has no doubt encouraged Militarism, though he admits that "Origen was bound to maintain that Christianity was incompatible with military service in a Pagan State," and, as a matter of fact, in the first two centuries Christians contemned and abstained from war. This is clearly shown in Gibbons' *Decline and Fall*, chaps. xv. and xvi. Mr. Lloyd therefore is not quite right when he says that Christianity, even in the sense in which he uses the term, *always* encouraged militarism. With the conversion of the Emperor Constantine, Christianity became a State affair, and necessarily favoured war.

(3) Mr. Lloyd says quite truly that neither in the Gospels nor in the Epistles is war, as such, condemned. He regards as significant, in the sense of favouring war, the text, "Think not that I came to send peace on earth; I came not to send peace, but a sword" (Matt. x. 34). The passage, however, continues (verses 35 and 36) "For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes shall be they of his own household." I think there is really no doubt that the word "sword" is here used in a figurative sense. This view is borne out by the parallel passage in Luke's Gospel, where we read: "Suppose ye that I am come to give peace on earth. I tell you nay, but rather *division*" (Luke xii. 51), and then it goes on very much the same as in Matthew. What is meant is simply that members of one household would be divided in their attitude to himself. It could hardly be intended that the mother and daughter were to fight a duel with swords. I don't think anything worse than lingual warfare was contemplated.

Then Mr. Lloyd quotes the passage (Luke xxii. 36-38) where immediately before the betrayal, Jesus said "He that hath no sword let him sell his garment and buy one.....And they said, Lord, behold here are two swords. And he said unto them, it is enough." Now, it seems to me, Jesus meant simply to indicate the hostility and opposition which the disciples would meet in the world after he himself was taken and put to death. He could not have intended them to use the sword, because when subsequently at the arrest in the garden, Peter drew a sword and wounded a servant of the high priest, Jesus severely reprimanded him and said, "Put up again thy sword into its place; for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword." This prohibition is corroborated by Luke xxii. 50 and 51, and by John xviii. 11.

These passages, taken in conjunction with the life of Jesus and the whole spirit of his teaching, indicate that early Christianity, like early Buddhism, was opposed to war, and that the general practice of the ethical teaching of Jesus would bring about that era of universal goodwill and brotherhood to which Mr. Lloyd looks forward. The question is, however, "Can the teaching of Jesus be applied to rational politics, or is it an unpractical idealism attainable only by a comparatively few individuals?"

As to the Epistles, I don't think Paul specially condemns war, but he definitely forbids litigation by Christians (1 Cor. vii. 1-8). If contests in law for one's rights are to be condemned, much more one would think contests in battle.

A. RUSSELL.

ATHEIST OR AGNOSTIC?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It may interest your readers to know that John Davidson wrote to the late Mr. G. W. Foote in reference to Atheism. In a letter dated August 27, 1907, he says:—

If we accept the name atheist we limit ourselves, we distort our growth; we will become depraved; we will develop a cancer or a wen. The power of a name when the name stands for a tenet is incalculable, and the effect of its adoption is always disastrous; because a name is adopted only when the

tenet is ripe and ready to decay. Consider, for example, Conservatism and Liberalism; the moment they were named and known they began to putrefy. I think the time has come for Freethinkers to rise above theism and atheism, to come out of it altogether. We must, if we are to grow. There is the word, Man, a virgin word, a zero. Let us call ourselves Man, and begin all things over again.....

WILLIAM REPTON.

National Secular Society.

OUR Interim Conference opened at Ghandos Hall, Charing Cross, W.C., on Sunday, October 28. Despite the threatened air raids, the attendance was exceedingly good. The Branches represented were: Battersea, Bethnal Green, Glasgow, Kingsland, North London, South Shields, South London, Regent's Park, Swansea, and West Ham.

Amongst the Vice-Presidents who attended were: Messrs. Heaford, Leat, Quinton, Roger, Samuels, Silverstein, Thurlow, and Wood, Mrs. Rolf, Miss Stanley, and Miss Kough. There was also a good muster of individual members.

The President opened the meeting by reading the resolution convening the Conference.

Motion No. 2, by J. W. Hackett, Birmingham:—

This Conference deplors the fact that Provincial Branches of the N.S.S. have failed to imitate London Branches in conducting Open Air Propaganda during the summer months, whereby the desired increased circulation of Freethought literature has been much impeded, and an opportunity lost at a most favourable time for the presentation of our aims and objects. It records its opinion that in consequence of the War the present time is in the highest degree favourable to the systematic propagation of Freethought principles

was moved by Mr. J. T. Lloyd and seconded by Mr. R. Chapman (South Shields). It met with general approval and was carried unanimously.

Motion No. 3, by North London Branch:—

The North London Branch greatly regrets that other Branches have not availed themselves of the facilities afforded for the insertion of brief notices of Meetings in the columns of the *Freethinker* through the Motion No. 12, Section B., unanimously carried at the last Annual Conference. This gathering, therefore, requests the President, in his capacity as Editor of the *Freethinker*, to exercise his influence towards this end

was discussed at some length. Various suggestions were offered, and it was finally carried with a reminder from the President that the matter lay with the Branches, who alone could supply the information.

Motion No. 4, by South London Branch:—

That inasmuch as the National Secular Society has insufficient funds directly under its control for the purposes of propagating Freethought principles, this Conference recommends that the Executive take immediate steps to raise a Propagandist Fund, thus making it possible that the objects for which the Society was formed be successfully carried out

gave rise to a somewhat contentious discussion, during which a considerable amount of ancient history was reviewed. It was ultimately brought to the vote by the reminder of the clock and the Chairman's hammer, and carried by a large majority.

Motions by the West Ham Branch:—

(a). That this Conference enters its protest against the clergy being exempt from the military duties of citizens whilst claiming all other civil rights, and further protests against all places of worship being free from rates and taxes.

(b). That this Conference views with regret the tendency to introduce the spirit of Militarism into the State schools.

(c). That this Conference desires to call the attention of the Minister of Education to the need for the exclusion of all religious instruction from the curriculum of the State schools as the only fair solution of the question

were all carried unanimously.

An interesting innovation then followed in the shape of a discussion, opened by Mr. A. Eagar, on "Why Our Reformed Educational System Should Promote Patriotism," and in which the President, Messrs. Wilde, Howell Smith, Chapman, Miller, and Palmer took part.

After an interlude for tea, the evening Public Meeting opened at 6.30. The President again occupied the chair, and the subject on the Agenda not reached in the afternoon, *i.e.*, a discussion on "Freethought and the Family," was opened by Mr. T. F. Palmer. Of the several phases of the question touched upon, the greatest interest was shown in the references to the subject of Divorce. Valuable suggestions as to the part Freethinkers should, and do, play in social reconstruction were made by a member of the Bethnal Green Branch, and in closing the meeting the President announced that the success of the day's proceedings warranted the convening of similar gatherings early in the future.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

The Three Princes.

ONCE there lived a wise king who had three sons. When this king was growing old he called his sons together and said: "I am now old, my end is near, and I would fain give each of you that which he deserves before I die. All that I know I have taught you. It now rests with yourselves what fortune shall be yours. Each of you shall rule my kingdom for a year. At the end of three years, that son who has won the love of my people will be king."

Now, the eldest son, who ruled first, thought: "I am the eldest prince, and heir to the throne. The kingdom is sure to be mine. Why should I worry?" And he spent his year wearing fine clothes and following pleasure. The king was ill pleased, but said nothing until the year was up. Then he took his son and cast him in a monastery, and the second prince ascended the throne.

This prince was crafty, and reasoned with himself: "If I rule ill, I shall lose the people's love, and also the kingdom; if I rule well, I shall lose my brothers' love, there will be war between us, and I may lose the kingdom to boot. To what end, therefore, should I rule?" And he considered long, and said: "I will wait and see who is to be king." And he spent his year waiting. His father marvelled at such craft, and, when the time was come, banished his son to a far country to complete his education.

Then the youngest prince ruled. And he thought: "I am here for one year only. My father would never trust his kingdom to one so young as I. Ruling is work for the wise and old. I am but a boy. The king has put me here for a jest. When my brothers return, the wisest will be crowned, and I shall be sent to seek my fortune. Why not make my fortune now?" So he granted himself many treasures, and taxed the people heavily, and when his time was up he had much wealth, and his father was pleased in secret.

Meanwhile the people, wronged by neglect and robbery, rose and cried: "The old king is nearly dead, and the three would-be kings would be better dead; let us have no more kings to spoil the land. And the king heard the people murmuring, and said: "Have I not always ruled you well? Have I not fed and clothed you, and taken all your cares upon myself? Have I done ill by you?—or have I done well? And the people answered: "O king, thou didst well always, and we were content; but thy sons do ill only, and we will not have them to rule us when thou art gone. Thy sons will die when thou diest."

And the king knew the day of kings had passed, and looked upon the ground. Then he said sadly: "Let it be even as my people say; let there be no more kings, lest evil men govern. But what wilt thou have in place of kings?" And the people were dumb, for they had not considered that. Then the king said: "In a far country are many wise men called Priests and Politicians and Policemen. Those wise men turn their backs upon the world and its joys, and live only to serve the common people. Priests bear the burdens of conscience, and relieve you of all questions of right and wrong. Politicians carry the worries of daily life upon their shoulders, and leave you free to work with unburdened minds. Policemen guard your property, and teach the beauties of liberty. Three of these wise men are now leaving their country in search of people to succour. Is it your will that they come here to take from my hands the guiding of this kingdom?" And the people cried with a loud voice:

"Yea, yea! Send us the Priest and the Politician and the Policeman, O wise old king!"

Then the king sent for his sons, and disguised them secretly as Priest and Politician and Policeman, and taught them how to act, and presented them to the people, who rejoiced and were glad that the days of kings had gone. But the wise old king retired to his couch, and said: "Now I can close my eyes in peace, for my sons will rule for ever."

F. L. B. G.

The Faithful Disciple.

AND a certain Bishop went down from his palace to the poor quarter of the city (in a motor car) and spake unto the multitude;

For though he was a mighty man, he was humble before God, and despised not the poor.

And being a faithful servant of the Lord, he went without purse and without scrip, taking only his cheque book with him.

And he came to the place where he was to preach the Gospel, and there were many people gathered together.

And they were poorly clothed and wan looking, and seemed bearers of great burdens.

And the Bishop prayed and thanked God for his mercy and lovingkindness.

And seeing some little children, he raised his hands and blessed them, saying: Suffer the little children.

And they did suffer, for they were much hungered, and disease was in many of them.

And he preached unto the people, and spake of God's great love and compassion.

And the people were much moved, and many believed and were saved, and went back to starvation and misery praising the Lord.

At eventide, having fared sumptuously, the Bishop called his household unto prayer; his family, and his maidservants, and his menservants, and the stranger that was within his gates.

And blessed the name of the Lord, and praised him with a loud voice for the wondrous works he had wrought that day;

And wrestled earnestly in prayer for other sheep who had not yet found their Shepherd.

And, lo, when he had finished, as many as were gathered together did exclaim with a thankful voice, Amen.

PERCY RIPLEY.

POPE'S EPITAPH ON GAY.

Of manners gentle, of affections mild;
In wit, a man; simplicity, a child;
With native humour tempering virtuous rage,
Form'd to delight at once and lash the age:
Above temptation in a low estate,
And uncorrupted, e'en among the great:
A safe companion, and an easy friend,
Unblamed through life, lamented in thy end.
These are thy honours! Not that here thy bust
Is mix'd with heroes, or with kings thy dust;
But that the worthy and the good shall say,
Striking their pensive bosoms—"Here lies Gay!"

Obituary.

I regret to state that our friend and fellow-Freethinker, Mr. Stirton, died on October 24 after a brief illness. That he was highly respected amongst us is borne out by the fact that his remains were followed to the grave at Balgay Cemetery by members of Dundee Trades Council, of which he was President for a number of years. Also by the members of I.L. Party, Rechabites, J.P., and Military Tribunal, and Town Council, and kindred bodies, all of which he had in various ways laboured for. In compliance with his own request, there was no religious mummery at his funeral. Speeches were delivered by Messrs. John Ogilvy and Ex-Bailie John Reid, both of whom did justice to his memory.—DAVID F. GLOAK (Dundee).

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. 15, at 7.30.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, "The Biological Aspect of Socialism." Introduced by Cyril E. M. Joad (Fabian Society); reply by T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Tube Station): 7, F. Shaller, "Darwin *versus* Moses."

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

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW (City Hall): J. T. Lloyd, 12 noon, "The Message of Freethought to the Times"; 6.30, "Humanism *versus* Christianity."

NEW MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Bakers' Hall, 56 Swan Street): 6.30, Mrs. B. A. Bayfield, "The Two Enemies of Civilization: War and Religion."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Dockers' Hall, "Elysium," High Street): Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner, 3, "Christianity and the Child"; 7, "Belief, Make-Belief, and Unbelief."

GOD AND THE AIR-RAID.

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