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## Views and Opinions.

### God and the War.

Why doesn't God end the War? Thousands of persons are asking that question to-day, and thousands of others are thinking it. Large numbers have already answered it to their own satisfaction, and the answer has been fatal to their Christianity. Being without any professional or vested interest in religious beliefs, they bring a relatively unsophisticated mind to bear upon the problem. And to them it appears plain that if there is a God, and he can bring the War to a satisfactory conclusion, he ought to do so. If he cannot bring it to a close, what is the use of all the talk of fatherly love, and of the divine control of the universe in the face of the brutal slaughter of the world's manhood? Our leaders in the War have declared it to be a crime to continue the contest for an hour longer than is absolutely necessary. The nations are fighting for peace, for humanity, and for civilization. The people are giving their all. God alone does nothing. He remains the great neutral, under conditions where neutrality spells an evasion of responsibility, and a callousness which outrivals by infinitude the callousness of man. If the world were governed by the orthodox Devil, he could vindicate his traditional character in no more thorough-going manner.

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### Pain and Providence.

In the *Manchester City News* for November 10, the Rev. A. L. Humphries, M.A., devotes a column to the consideration of the question put above, and, as is to be expected, leaves the question where he found it. He prefers to discuss it upon the broad issue of the function of pain and suffering in the world; and if he faced that question as we think it should be faced, one could find no fault with the method. Suffering, he says, is educational, it is disciplinary, or it is minatory—it warns us of a danger to which we are exposed. Neither statement meets the point at issue; and even if their relevancy were admitted, their ineffectiveness would be patent. For however educational pain may be, it is quite clear that large numbers fail to derive any educational benefit from its presence. And it is equally clear that pain is just as ineffective as a warning. What kind of a warning has war been to the world. War is nothing

new. People went to war thousands of years ago; they are at war to-day. And Mr. Humphries' professional brethren sing of the righteousness of war, and of its influence in developing character. Mr. Humphries says that much suffering comes as the sequel "to some breach of the laws which have been ordained to us." That is untrue. There is no such thing possible as a breach of natural law. Natural law is no more than the expression of causes and consequences. And a true picture of the world would be—granting a Deity—that of a God watchful to punish with the utmost severity, and the most unrelenting cruelty, every false step that human weakness and ignorance takes.

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### The Problem.

The real problem of the world's suffering, says Mr. Humphries, is that a large part of it "springs from malignity or folly, and is visited less upon the offenders themselves than upon their helpless and unoffending victims." This is, indeed, a real and a serious problem—to the Theist. It is no problem whatever to the Atheist. His problem is how to reduce the sum of suffering in the world, deserved or undeserved. But the believer in deity has to reconcile the fact to the theory of unmerited suffering, with the existence of a deity who should have prevented its occurrence. How does Mr. Humphries meet the question? In quite the old-fashioned and ineffective manner. Suffering is a sensation, and you cannot have sensations that are pleasant without running the risk of having those that are unpleasant. We are all, moreover, parts of a social whole. We reap the harvests that others have sown, and we cannot complain because we suffer the ills that others have wrought. This may be admitted, but it quite misses the point. For we have here only the bald truism that, given the present constitution of the universe, it is impossible to see how development can be achieved without the infliction of pain. But this obviously does not touch the root of the question. The objection is that, given a deity of the kind posited by the Theist, suffering should not be, and it is simply beside the point to reply that some benefit is derived from the suffering. The old difficulty remains, and it is accentuated by modern conditions. Either God could have brought about the same result by a different plan or he could not. On the first assumption you limit his goodness by implying that he deliberately chose the existing plan with its admitted imperfections. On the second assumption you limit his power by asserting his inability to act differently, and then reduce him to impotence by conditioning his activity to forces and conditions that defy his power of manipulation.

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### The Bogey of Freedom.

Mr. Humphries' final argument is that God has given man "freedom." God has given man a free will, and "however misguided its action, He must treat it as the reality it is." And then, becoming alive to the danger of positing a God who sets the world going and then does nothing throughout eternity but watch it go, Mr.

Humphries reminds us that God, as in this War, "kindles human wills" to effect the defeat of evil. "The non-intervention of God is only apparent." In that case, what becomes of the previous plea that God cannot interfere lest he infringes human freedom? God does, after all, interfere; and once more the question arises, Why does he not interfere effectively? If he can influence human wills to the extent of getting men to fight, why does he not influence them to the extent of getting them to live together in peace? Besides, what are we doing in the War but seeking to interfere with the "freedom" of the German will, as they wish to interfere with the "freedom" of our will? If the Allies had followed the example of God Almighty, and respected the "freedom" of the German will to the extent of non-interference, Germany by this time would have been all over Europe. If man imitated God, in what a state would the world be! If God imitated man at his best, how much a better place the world might become!

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#### The Nightmare of God.

Well may men ask "Why does not God end the War?" Well may they also ask "Why did he not prevent the War beginning?" If he does indeed "kindle human wills," why did he not influence the will of William of Germany and his advisers? Does anyone, we wonder, really find conviction in apologies, such as those offered by Mr. Humphries? Does anyone really believe that pain and suffering are always, or even generally, beneficial? We doubt it. Of all the idle tales told by defenders of Deity, this is the most idle. How many homes can each of us count in our experience as having been purified through suffering? How many lives can we not count that have been broken, and their usefulness destroyed, through pain and hardship? The problem of how to harmonize God and the world did not commence with the War, nor has the War added anything new to that question. All the War has done is to arouse many to the utter falsity and uselessness of the theistic philosophy. Lurid pictures have been drawn of what Europe dominated by a war-drunken military class would be like. But it could scarcely be worse than the prospect of the world dominated by an intelligence to which all this three years' horror was part of the divine plan of human education.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

#### A SONG OF SIGHING.

Would some little joy to-day  
Visit us, heart!  
Could it but a moment stay,  
Then depart;  
With the flutter of its wings  
Stirring sense of brighter things.  
Like a butterfly astray  
In a dark room,  
Telling outside there is day,  
Sweet flowers bloom,  
Birds are singing, trees are green,  
Runnels ripple silver sheen.  
Heart, we have now been so long  
Sad without change;  
Shut in deep from shine and song,  
Nor can range:  
It would do us good to know  
That the world is not all woe.  
Would some little joy to-day  
Visit us, heart!  
Could it but a moment stay,  
Then depart;  
With the lustre of its wings  
Lighting dreams of happy things,  
O sad my heart!

—James Thomson (B.V.).

## Faith and Doubt.

WE congratulate the Rev. Dr. Fort Newton upon his having crossed and recrossed the Atlantic Ocean with safety during the ruthless submarine warfare, and wish him a prosperous career in his adopted country. His first Sunday sermon after his return from America appeared in the *Christian Commonwealth* for November 7, and proves to be, in some respects, eminently suggestive, if not instructive. It is certainly one of the most remarkable discourses ever delivered from a pulpit, as well as one of the truest. Dr. Newton's admissions are delightfully refreshing, and their sincerity is undeniable. Even the text is perilously illuminating: "Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief" (Mark ix. 24). The preacher's first important admission is that "faith and doubt jostle one another in the multitude of our thoughts"; "the two struggle in every heart, and the struggle never ends." We do not accept as true the statement that "even the hardest Sceptic must be tempted at times to believe," for we know many unbelievers who are never subjected to such a temptation. Of course, we are aware that if the term "Sceptic" be taken in its etymological sense of one who reflects, suspends his judgment, or is in a state of uncertainty as to what is true, the statement quoted may be right; but even the dictionaries tell us that a Sceptic is "one who doubts or disbelieves the statements and doctrines of revealed religion, especially of Christianity." Surely, then, the "hardest Sceptic" is not at all likely to be much troubled, at any time, by the temptation to believe. This is a point, however, to which we do not attach any serious importance; but we are in complete agreement with the other admission, namely, that "the loftiest saint is often tempted to doubt." Dr. Newton says:—

Only a few years ago it was a fashion to say that doubt in respect to the truths of faith is due to moral impurity. Not so. Happily, the tendency was checked somewhat by Edna Lyall in her story entitled *Donovan*, which had a great vogue. There is a doubt born of moral impurity, but it is easily identified, being flippant, cynical, and irreverent. But not all doubt may be so defined or dealt with so glibly. They have learned little of life who do not know that the warfare with doubt is no incident, but a part of the life of faith. Each believing soul—aye, and each doubting soul—is a battlefield, and there is no discharge from the war.

We are convinced that the reverend gentleman is wrong when he affirms that doubt born of moral impurity is easily identified by its flippancy, cynicism, and irreverence. Are not flippancy and kindred qualities more matters of temperament than of character? Is not the reverend gentleman aware that a person may be flippant, cynical, and what he calls irreverent, without being morally impure? In the argument, however, this may be dismissed as a very minor point, the point of supreme importance being that in every believing soul there is going on a never-ending conflict between belief and unbelief, belief being never, for any length of time, absolutely cloudless and serene. In his *Holy War*, Bunyan describes Incredulity as unexpectedly stepping in and confounding Christian. "Such is the testimony of saintly lives in all ages."

One day a friend came to Luther, sorely grieved, complaining that he found himself at times unable to believe anything. Whereupon, to his amazement, the Reformer began praising God loudly for the confession, saying that he had long thought himself alone in that temptation, and had feared it might be a token of Divine displeasure. Thus the eternal debate lasts on into the Christian life, half the soul mistrusting God and the other half adoring him.

Dr. Newton goes on piling up the evidence. During a voyage in the summer he re-read the lives of Maurice, Kingsley, and John Stirling, and what he found therein was further testimony of the same import. Maurice and Kingsley were, each in his own way, leaders of religious thought, and yet both were tormented almost continually by doubt. "More than once Kingsley wrote to Maurice telling him that his faith was all gone, and asking him for a word of comfort and cheer." But Maurice was himself generally in the same predicament, and had very little real comfort and cheer to impart to his friend. Why does the minister of the City Temple tell his congregation all these darksome facts? This is his own answer:—

My purpose in recalling these inner struggles of noble minds is that we may learn that our experience of uncertainty, of misgiving, of dark doubt is not unique, and that the knowledge of how it was with others may bring solid comfort and help.

We frankly admit that Dr. Newton puts his case in a highly plausible, if not, cogent, manner, which is as follows:—

Surely if great, pure, and beautiful souls were thus pursued by doubt, and in spite of their doubts—perhaps because of them—wrought so richly, we may take new heart and new hope. By knowing that this conflict of faith and doubt has been appointed, for ends we can imagine if we cannot define them, we are forearmed in advance.

Such is the argument of the sermon under discussion. It is a reasonable assumption that Dr. Newton is himself often, if not chronically, in a state of uncertainty as to whether Christianity is true or false. This is a fact which he does not even wish to hide from his congregation, and the only comfort he offers is, "We are all in the same boat." There is, naturally, some consolation in the possession of that knowledge, man being, after all, a gregarious animal. According to the reverend gentleman the only questions that matter are the following:—

Is there a God? What is the purpose and worth of life? Has it a purpose? Or is all mere chance, a ship on a shoreless sea, drifting—if we can speak of drifting when there is no direction, no star? Does death end all? Compared with these questions, all else sinks into insignificance.

And yet these are the questions concerning which the firmest and loftiest believers are, most of the time, in a state of painful uncertainty! This is amazingly curious, to say the least. Dr. Newton inclines to the opinion that "this conflict of faith and doubt has been appointed," though he cannot explain the reason why. "Appointed" by whom? Is it conceivable God has appointed that his own servants, the offspring of his love, should go through life without knowing for certain whether their Father and Employer exists or not? Is it thinkable that he has slung them on time's theatre without giving them the ghost of an idea for what purpose?

In reality, Dr. Newton's argument is left woefully unfinished. Had he proceeded but one step further into it, the inevitable conclusion would have startled both him and his hearers. Why is there a perpetual conflict between faith and doubt? Because doubt is natural, and faith unnatural. Supernatural religion was born in the mists of the race's "Primal Stupidity." It is the child of fear based on ignorance. It is one of the incontrovertible facts of evolution that in proportion as knowledge of the natural advances faith in the supernatural declines. Superstition thrives only in the dark. What is being borne in upon us more and more is that we are in the hands, not of a Supernatural Being, but of the great law of universal causation, a law that operates

infallibly and unceasingly everywhere in spite of the preaching of all the clergymen in the world. And, by-the-bye, why are there clergymen, and what is their business? In a word, clergymen are living witnesses to the truth that belief in a supernatural religion is by no means natural to mankind, but must be forced down its throat in the days of its childhood and youth, and then prevented by all sorts of persuasive and even coercive ministries, in school and church, from oozing out again, which, on Dr. Newton's own showing, it is all through life threatening to do, and, in so many instances, actually succeeds in doing.

Towards Dr. Newton, personally, we entertain the kindest feelings, and our criticism is conceived in the friendliest spirit. There are a few points on which we should like to set him right. In the minds of convinced Freethinkers there is never the faintest shadow of a disposition to believe in the Supernatural. They know nothing of any conflict between unbelief and faith. It is our privilege to be acquainted with Atheists of the third generation, and they have never had the least experience of the struggle. They are totally ignorant of "the lonely horror of unbelief which no one escapes." Dr. Newton is entirely wrong in his characterization of the effect of unbelief upon those who conscientiously hold and profess it. Besides, there is no such thing as chance in the universe. We are all under law, and in knowledge of and obedience to that law alone can life be found which is worth living.

J. T. LLOYD.

## Christianity in the Melting-Pot.

Shall quips and sentences and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour?

—Shakespeare, "Much Ado About Nothing."

SCIENCE and religion have ever been mortal enemies. Scientific teaching and investigation, or, indeed, any form of intellectual liberty, has always been incompatible with assent to the dogmas of religion. The entire organization of priestcraft has invariably been brought to bear against science on the ground that it is a most powerful solvent of religious faith. This resistance of the Church of Christ to the prevalent opinions of scientists has no indisputable claim to our respect. When we remember that the system of Copernicus, the discoveries of Galileo, the law of gravitation of Newton, and the Darwinian theory were all in turn received in the same venerable quarter with all the firmness of a mule, we are inclined to attribute that resistance, not to the weakness of the arguments of the scientists, but to the priestly dislike of knowledge itself.

Chemistry was opposed as an impious prying into the secrets of God, and the early chemists were regarded, charitably, as agents of the Devil. Physiology and medicine were opposed on similar grounds. Geology and biology were also opposed tooth and nail by the Bride of Christ. She bitterly resented all inquiry, and preferred explaining natural phenomena by mythological invention.

After these many centuries of opposition, however, a lady attempted to build a golden bridge between religion and science. As the lady hailed from the land of tall buildings and tall statements, the new evangel was not hid under a bushel. It was spread abroad in the approved methods of patent medicine advertising, and the Gospel according to Mary Baker Glover Eddy bids fair to-day to rival the older evangel of Jesus Christ. The newest of new Bibles, *Christian Science: A Key to the Scriptures*, of which the American lady-saviour was the author appeared in 1866, and is now nearing its two hundredth edition.

The new evangel has been received by tens of thousands of half-educated religious men and women, reverent of learning, quite unable to discriminate it from its adulterated imitation. And Mrs. Eddy, quite as indiscriminating as any of her readers, was equipped admirably by a nodding acquaintance with theology, metaphysics, and a pseudo-scientific vocabulary, and the gift of a tenacious memory, to give them the thing they longed for. Words were Mrs. Eddy's stock-in-trade. Her pomp of court and her priesthood were verbosity. There are five hundred pages of polysyllabic words in her book. To a reader familiar with the sober use of scientific terms, her explanations and definitions are delirious jargon. They are the bastard offspring of a riotous imagination playing, in the light of half-grasped ideas from the scientists, upon resonant polysyllables. For example, here is a—definition:—

Matter, mythology, mortality; another name for mortal mind; illusion, intelligence, substance, and life in non-intelligence and mortality; life resulting in death, and death in life; sensation in the sensationless; mind originating in matter; the opposite of truth; the opposite of God; that of which immortal mind takes no cognizance; that which mortal mind sees, feels, tastes, and smells in belief.

The author of this evangel from Earlswood, this farrago of nonsense, has been appropriately hailed as a teacher "second only to" Jesus Christ. It was only proper, therefore, that she should regard matter, mythology, and mortality as synonymous. Even the Master, who considered a "whale" was a "fish," could not improve upon this colossal blunder.

The topsy-turvy nature of the new evangel is shown by another quotation from the divine revelation:—

The metaphysics of Christian science prove the rule by inversion.

For example:—

There is no pain in truth, and there is no truth in pain.

Yet Mrs. Eddy, with pain, regrets that ontology receives less attention than physiology, and relates the following improving anecdote, worthy of the saucy and mendacious Baron Munchausen:—

It is related that a father, anxious to try such an experiment, plunged his infant babe, only a few hours old, into water for several minutes, and repeated this operation daily, until the child could remain under water twenty minutes, moving and playing without harm like a fish. Parents should remember this, and so learn how to develop their children properly on dry land.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" This beats the audacity of the story of *Jonah and the Whale*. What, in the name of common sense, did the lady-saviour suppose ontology to mean? It is fitting that such a teacher should give her disciples a form of prayer and a confession of faith which bears the same resemblance to the "Lord's Prayer" that margarine does to butter. The high-priestess of the new faith strutted in borrowed plumes, and charged three hundred dollars for a dozen lessons. No American oil-king, no provision profiteer, ever kept a keener eye or a tighter fist on money—the only material thing in existence which Christian Science allows to be real. She never allowed a dollar that had no friends to get by her alive. In short, Mrs. Eddy was a religious "boss," like the late-lamented "General" Booth.

Fortunately, the high-priestess of the newest and most successful form of religiosity did not escape ridicule. Mark Twain, the prince of jesters, with that characteristic twinkle in his eye, that irresistible drawl in his voice, that gravity of manner, tried to convince the lady-saviour's devotees that they might be mistaken. This

is the way Mark burlesqued the Yankee Abracadabra:—

There is an account of the restoration to perfect health, in a single night, of a fatally injured horse, by the application of Christian science. I can stand a good deal, but I recognize that the ice is getting thin here. That horse had as many as fifty claims; how could he demonstrate over them? Could he do the All Good, Good Good, Good Gracious, Liver, Bones, Truth, all down but nine, set them up on the other alley? Could he intone the scientific Statement of Being? Now, could he? Wouldn't it give him a relapse? Let us draw the line at horses. Horses and furniture.

This is genuine fun, and more effective than reams of prosaic argument. It never affected the enormous popularity of the Eddy evangel. For when a person joins the Christian Science temples, he must leave his brains at home. He must leave them locked up in an iron safe, or else have them removed by a skilled surgeon. If he should forget himself, and think but once, the by-laws provide that he shall be fired out—instantly—for ever—no return ticket.

We set out in a spirit of inquiry to make a serious examination of the claims made by Mrs. Eddy. But this nonsensical system makes us giddy and tired; for, of all the strange, frantic, and incomprehensible books which have emanated from the half-crazy brains of religious maniacs, this book takes the first prize. It is more incoherent than the ravings of Joanna Southcott. Beside it Joe Smith's *Book of Mormon* is a plain, unvarnished tale. The *Forty Coming Wonders* of the late Prophet Baxter is shrinking modesty compared with the impudent effusion of Mary Eddy. This Yankee Bible fairly takes the breath away, and makes the head swim. No other less colloquial phrase can so aptly describe the effect of claims so far transcending sanity. One reels back from the insane heights of "Christian" Science to the simplicity of a rational system like Secularism, suited to the requirements of the age, and freed from the absurd aberrations of ignorance.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Bible and Immortality.

### THE UNDERWORLD.

In the story of the "Witch of Endor," king Saul said to the woman "Bring me up Samuel," and when the spirit of that prophet appeared, it asked "Why hast thou disquieted me, to bring me up?" Samuel had died some time before, and his body was then in the "grave." This last word, as well as that translated "hell," is in the Hebrew termed *Sheol*, which the lexicon defines as "the abode of the soul after death."

We have incontrovertible evidence that many ancient peoples believed that man possessed within him something that was able to leave the body during sleep and go wandering about, seeing and acting just as the man himself did during the day, after which it returned and re-entered the body. Upon waking up in the middle of a dream, and remembering what he had been doing in it, the primitive man, after having it proved to him that he had never moved from his couch, naturally came to the conclusion that the actions which he remembered in the dream must have been performed by a second self that had power to leave the body at will. Later, when this idea became a settled conviction, the question would arise as to what would become of the "double" at death. By the more rational of the people the answer would be that it died with the body; but many among them would think otherwise—and hence we come to *Sheol*, "the abode of the soul after death."

The decipherment of the cuneiform inscriptions of

Assyria has thrown much new light upon Old Testament literature, and amongst other matters, upon the origin and meaning of *Sheol*. From this source we find that the Hebrew *Sheol* was derived from the Assyrian *al-Sualu*—"the great city of the dead." The Assyrian idea of the abode of the so-called "spirits of the dead" was that of an immense tract of ground enclosed and surrounded by seven walls, each having a gate guarded by two cherubim for entrance, outside which, and flowing all around it, was the dark river of death—across which the dead were ferried by a pilot in his boat. Finally, this last home of the "departed spirits," where complete silence reigned, was imagined to be somewhere under the earth, and to be wrapped in total darkness. The names by which this "city of the dead" was most generally referred to are: "the land whence none return"—"the house of darkness"—"the house of corruption." The Assyrian legend of the descent of the goddess Ishtar into this region thus commences:—

To the land whence none returned, to the land of corruption, Ishtar, the daughter of the Moon-god, turned her mind.....To the house of darkness.....to the house from which none come back, by the road which none can return, to the house from which light is excluded.

The Greeks, as we know, had a similar underworld called *Hades*, around which flowed the river Styx, with a pilot named Charon to ferry the spirits across.

The ancient Hebrews were of the same race as the Assyrians, and were acquainted with much of the literature pertaining to those people. From the Assyrians they took the names of their months, their sabbath, and the plan of their temple, as well as a large portion of their civil laws. It is not surprising, then, that they should adopt some of the Assyrian ideas respecting *Sheol*. Hence, we find that some of the Hebrew people also believed in a vast underworld, a dark, dreary, subterranean region, in which lay past generations of the "spirits of the dead" who amidst filth, worms, stench, and corruption, were sleeping their long last sleep, which would continue unbroken until the end of time. The story of the Witch of Endor, even admitting it to be a fiction, plainly indicates that there were individuals amongst the Hebrews who professed to have the power to call up spirits from *Sheol*, to which place, when done with, they were compelled to return. These wizards and witches are denounced in the Pentateuch as wicked impostors that should not be allowed to live. The Endor story also shows that inquiries such as there described were practised in Old Testament times in the later period of the Jewish kings. Thus Manassch, king of Judah, who "did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord," in addition to other delinquencies "used enchantments, and dealt with them that had familiar spirits and with wizards" (2 Kings xxi. 6). The words in italics signify "appointed" or "placed in office."

We will now see what the Hebrew writers say upon the subject, and will commence with what the Lord is reported as saying to the prophet Ezekiel.

Ezek. xxxii. 18-29.—Son of man, wail for the multitude of Egypt, and cast them down.....unto the nether parts of the earth, with them that go down into the pit.....The strong among the mighty.....in the midst of *Sheol*.....they are gone down, they lie still, even the uncircumcised, slain by the sword. Asher is there and all her company.....all of them slain, fallen by the sword—Elam and all her multitude.....all of them slain by the sword, are gone down into the nether parts of the earth—Meshech, Tubal, and all her multitude.....slain by the sword.....shall they not lie with the mighty that are fallen, which are gone down to *Sheol* with their weapons of war?

Here we see nations that were enemies of the Israelites doomed to go down to "the pit," which is but another

name for *Sheol*, as was also the expression "the nether parts of the earth."

In Isaiah xiv. 3-20 we find a long "parable" directed against a nameless king of Babylon, who was "the great oppressor of nations," in which the sleeping inhabitants of *Sheol*, having somehow heard of his death, wake up to await his coming.

Isa. xiv. 9.—*Sheol* down beneath is moved for thee (i.e., the king of Babylon) to meet thee at thy coming: it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth: it hath raised up upon their thrones all the kings of the nations.

Upon the appearance in *Sheol* of the king of Babylon, the kings and princes there greet him with the questions "Art thou also become as weak as we?" "Art thou become like unto us?" Then, looking at him from head to foot, they turn to each other and ask "Is *this* the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms, and overthrow the cities thereof?" One verse in this "parable" appears almost startling. This reads:—

All the kings of the nations (in *Sheol*) sleep in glory, every one in his own house.

According to this statement, the spirits of the dead kings in *Sheol* had each a small chamber to himself, and sat there propped up dressed in his robes of state.

We will next see what some other Hebrew writers have to say of *Sheol*.

Psalms xlix. 14.—Like sheep they are laid in *Sheol*; death shall feed on them.

Job vii. 9.—As the cloud is consumed and vanisheth away, so he that goeth down to *Sheol* shall come up no more.

Job xvii. 13.—If I look for *Sheol* as mine house; if I have spread my couch in the darkness; if I have said to corruption, Thou art my father; to the worm, Thou art my mother and my sister; where then is my hope? It shall go down to the bars of *Sheol*, where there is rest in the dust.

Job x. 21, 22.—I go whence I shall not return, even to the land of darkness and the shadow of death; a land of thick darkness, as darkness itself; a land of the shadow of death, without any order, where the light is as darkness. (See also Job xi 8; xiv. 10-12; xvi. 22; Psalm xxxiii. 4; xlix. 19.)

Looking now at the foregoing passages, there can be no doubt as to the belief of many of the ancient Hebrews with respect to death. That condition of the body, or of the imaginary "spirit" within the body, was regarded as an eternal sleep, from which there was no awakening. There can be no doubt, also, that they knew nothing of a life after death, to be passed in eternal bliss in heaven or in eternal torments in hell, as taught in the New Testament. It is clear, then, that the only life they had ever heard of was the natural one lived on the earth. It may, further, be noted that the books in which reference is made to the underworld are of late date. The book of Ezekiel was written during the Exile; that of Isaiah is made up of paragraphs composed both before and after the Exile; the date of the book of Job is unknown, but its long discussions clearly indicate a late period in Jewish history.

There is a paragraph in Ecclesiastes, which is often quoted, that may here be noticed. This reads:—

Ecc. iii. 19-21.—For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them: as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath (or spirit); and man hath no pre-eminence above the beasts.....All go into one place: all are of the dust, and all turn to dust again. Who knoweth the spirit of man whether it goeth upward, and the spirit of the beast whether it goeth downward to the earth.

Here the writer makes no distinction between body and spirit, and plainly implies that the body, when living,

constitutes the whole man. Both man and beast had the same breath or spirit, which, he seems to have imagined, kept them alive; after death both man and beast returned to dust. He appears to have thought that people died simply because the breath placed in the body by God at birth had departed, and that in the case of man this breath or spirit went upward "unto God who gave it," while in that of the beast, it went downward to the earth. Thus the same writer, or possibly another, says:—

Eccl. xii. 3, 7. —Because man goeth to his *long home*, and the mourners go about the streets.....and the dust (*i.e.*, man) shall return to the earth as it was, and *the spirit return unto God who gave it.*

As we have already seen, the so-called "soul" or "spirit" in man was in the majority of cases nothing more than "breath"—the chief exception being the "spirit of the dead," which, apparently, was supposed to be a species of ghost or phantom. That the "abode of departed spirits" was a purely imaginary place goes, of course, without saying.

ABRACADABRA.

## A Shepherd's Death.

[The following story is published by the *Librejo Esperanto*, Moscow, in *Oriente Almanako*, a collection of Eastern stories translated into Esperanto, and was originally written by J. Bukurauli in the language of the Kartvelians, one of the many races of the Caucasus.]

IT was the end of September. The sky over Trialeti was covered with brown-grey clouds. The cold mountain breeze made one shiver.

On the summit of a mountain a shepherd pastured his flock. The sheep, huddling close together owing to the cold, greedily ate the sweet mountain grass, and the shepherd, sitting by a stream, began his miserable breakfast.

Too modest was the shepherd's meal, but his lively and healthy youthfulness was enviable. Having lived from an early age on the very breast of nature, and hardened by unfavourable winds, he looked as healthy and blooming as nature, whose son he was. On his sunburnt face there was no sign of evil; he looked about him sincerely and without affectation. It was cold, but he did not even think of complaining about that. He would have been a bad shepherd if he had not been contented with his lot, if he would not have tolerated uncomplainingly hunger and cold, or would not have passed the night in only his burka<sup>1</sup> without sleeping.

He had been accustomed for some time to what one calls "a dog's life," but, at the same time, there flamed in his heart the hope that, in the near future, he would have his own flock of sheep.....

Dreaming attracted him: he recalled his unhappy childhood, when he, an orphan, trembled in the presence of his uncle's second wife; he remembered how she mercilessly beat and tormented him, turned him out of doors, and he, hungry and clad in rags, lay the whole day and night under the open sky. He remembered, too, how he quietly disappeared and came on to the Shiraka steppe. There a good hearted old man gave him shelter and "made a man of him." The disagreeable thoughts gave place to pleasant musings: Behold, he looks and almost sees his loving and unselfish young wife. She sits by the fire cuddling their sturdy little child. He kicks, smiles, and triumphantly watches the roaring fire throwing out golden-coloured flames.

Then comes the long-awaited minute: one week will pass, then a second, and he will go home, rest in his own

<sup>1</sup> A Circassian fur cloak.

house, be among his acquaintances, and see once again his native village, the fields, and his friends.....

The sky became more and more disturbed, it grew angry and enraged. It began to thunder and blow terribly, it darkened. The stormy tempest and lightning and thunder terrified everything round about, and seemed to wish to wipe out of existence every being on the earth. The sheep bleated pitifully with fear, wildly running here and there, and, in the end, looking for a calm place, they ran without understanding, towards a chasm. The first running sheep, failing to preserve its balance, fell in and was killed; a second and a third followed. Wishing to save his flock from death, the shepherd barred the way. He ran now to this side, now to that, shouting and beating the sheep with his crook, almost beating some to death, but in vain; they madly pushed one another and innocently fell into the depths. The shepherd, seeing that they would all perish, threw away his burka and took off his long fur in order to act more freely. Convinced that his crook was not effective, he started to shoot, but again without success: the chasm was becoming filled with living bodies. The wind strengthened and scattered around grains of sand and little stones. The shepherd hopelessly lowered his hands and looked on. Drops of sweat appeared on his sunburnt face, which was getting blue.....

The tempest ceased and the sky became calm. It began to snow. Gradually the sheep became covered by a white shroud, and in only a few hours they were entombed in the snow. All perished. Only the shepherd remained alive, standing motionless and looking into the chasm with sorrowful eyes, and with him, his faithful shepherd dog.

"Oh! God, where then is thy justice?" groaned the shepherd, throwing his gun into the chasm and sitting down by the edge.

Night fell. Clouds covered the mountain top.....The stars began to shine. The moon appeared also, lighting up with its rays the snow-covered Mount Trialeti. The mountain slept, while somewhere at the base, shepherds guarded their flocks.

Two days later, a villager brought on an ass from the village some salt for the sheep, and food for the shepherd. He searched in vain. "Perhaps he is on the top," he thought.

"Ah-oo-oo!" he called to the shepherd. "There came back in reply only the heartrending whining of the dog. He turned towards the latter, who seeing him, whined more pitifully. He came nearer, and found the shepherd on the ground.

"Alex! Alex!" He commenced to shake him. Alas! he did not succeed in waking him. Alex, like his flock, was no longer alive.

*Translated from the Esperanto by*

A. H. WORTMAN.

## The Blank Wall.

### II.

UNDER the abnormal stress of war the mind of man contrives to associate moral ideals with those actions which are naturally involved in the manifestation of war, such as the killing of men, etc.; and, indeed, all the various inhuman and monstrous objects contained in the fact of brute force. These things are now being associated with the popular picture paper idealism which seeks to melt "Christianity" with War; Love with Hate; Justice with Cant; Dignity with Degradation; and Truth with Lies.

"Ministers of God," agents for the "Spiritual Father of all Men," parade solemnly into their Churches in order to induce their congregations to swell the money-bags of the State, so that a Great War may be won as efficiently as

possible. The result is this, that the concept of money as a power is immeasurably intensified. The triumphant evilness of the money-fetish is brought home with such force into the minds of the populace, that it will be a truism for the majority that hard cash has done as much for the success of brute force in a war as the primitive instincts of the men who have been sacrificed in the trenches.

This will, doubtless, be a correct impression. In this lies the stupefying tragedy of the popular mentality. War, as a barbaric argument which chokes Reason with blood, and being the negation of all idealism and sanity, must, logically, be substantially aided by so low and corrupt a force as the commercial force.

By investing money in the War Loan a man may feel that he is indirectly firing bullets at the enemy. He may sit comfortably at home in his arm-chair and visualize his five pounds "doing their bit."

Every fit man into the trenches for slaughter, and the rest obsessed by the power of money to win the War.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

### Acid Drops.

A young Belfast girl of 23 years of age, summoning a printer for the recovery of wages, declined to take the oath, and professed herself an Agnostic. The affirmation was allowed, but the following conversation occurred between the Recorder and the plaintiff:—

His Honour—You don't see agnosticism running about the country. Where did you pick it up?

Plaintiff—I read books of Ingersoll.

His Honour—That is very bad reading for a young girl like you.

We take this report from the *Belfast Evening Telegraph* as one more example of the "insolence of office," on which we have so often commented. The judge's remarks were uncalled for, and insulting. The slander on Ingersoll may pass, his reputation is not likely to suffer from the remarks of an Irish judge. But the insult to the young lady is unpardonable. Had she been a reader of some of the erotic piety of the Catholic Church, no such remarks would have been made. Miss Mitchell was not there on any criminal charge, and that made the comment the worse.

About the same date as the above case an inquest was being held at Dromore, Co. Tyrone, on the bodies of Patrick and Michael M'Gurgan. The latter had not been reading "bad" literature, such as was given to the world by Ingersoll. He had been reading "good" literature, of the kind provided by the Churches. Result—a religious mania, which led Michael to shoot his brother and then himself. Had he read Ingersoll and other Freethinkers, there might have been one tragedy the less in Ireland.

How history repeats itself! During the Napoleonic wars, Mr. Edmund Gosse tells us, "the average Englishman believed the French to be a race of dissolute Atheists." During the present War the same pleasant opinion is held concerning the Germans.

The Rev. H. C. Walker, of Warley, Essex, who has been an Army Chaplain in Mesopotamia, says that the Arabs did a good trade with our soldiers in selling them chips from the "tree of knowledge of Good and Evil" on the site of the Garden of Eden. Evidently, soldiers are not classified as "Church of England" for nothing.

The Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell, writing in the *Daily News*, says "the Church professes to place in each parish an official teacher of religion and morality." "Professes" is quite good. A large number of citizens regard the clergy as exponents of superstition and conventionality.

Oh, those dear bishops! What would the poor world do without their precious words of wisdom? Here is Bishop Welldon telling us that "the War has brought men like Mr. Wells and Mr. Bottomley back, not, indeed, to Christian

orthodoxy, but to the religious or spiritual way of looking at the universe." Is that the only consolation that the Bishop can derive from the spectacle of thirty-five millions of men arrayed for murder?

The *Church Times* continues in a state of disturbance over the marriage question. Its great dread appears to be that of a general recognition of the supremacy of the Civil Law in determining the conditions of the marital relation. It is even willing to accept the Scotch principle of agreement before witnesses so long as the State has not the decisive word. "The fundamental truth," it says, "is that marriage is a natural relation, not an artificial relation created by law." So far we agree; but that misses the point at issue. The State does not claim to create the natural relation of marriage, nor to order it. All it does is to decree the conditions under which it should exist, and the conditions under which it is prepared to enforce the agreement. What the *Church Times* is aiming at is the recognition that husband and wife "are joined together by God," and that, as Euclid says, is absurd.

The story of a Sunday-school superintendent, who took advantage of a man's absence in France to lead his wife astray, was told in the Divorce Court recently. The superintendent's letters were pious. In one he wrote: "My great consolation is that I have not put asunder those who God has joined together, because I know that God is the God of Love, and He would not permit those who do not dearly love one another to be joined together." The husband, on his return, gave the co-respondent a sound thrashing, and a decree nisi was granted by the Court, with costs against the superintendent. The restraining power of religion is not apparent in the case.

There were 134,029 lunatics in England and Wales at the beginning of the year—3,159 less than last year. Providence is getting quite tender-hearted.

Canon Chichester, speaking at Weybridge, said "a serious defect of the times is the starvation pay of the clergy." Perhaps the dear bishops will devote a portion of the salaries to provide bread for the unfortunate rectors and vicars.

From *John Bull* for November 10:—

Apropos of our story of the Madonna and Child leaning over the town of Albert, from the heavily shelled tower of the ruined Cathedral, the *Freethinker* charges us with "gulling" the public, and says it "happens to know the truth." Then why not tell it?

So we could; but we gave, and still give, Mr. Bottomley an opportunity of stating the facts. And we repeat that neither German nor English shells have anything to do with the present position of the statue. Some religious papers saw a chance of working a "miracle," at the expense of truth, and Mr. Bottomley followed their lead. Mr. Bottomley's picture of the "folk of Arras and Albert" believing that "God raised His hand to shield from harm" the statue of the Virgin is ridiculous. Pious folk away from Arras and Albert may believe it. The people at Arras and Albert know better. So do our own soldiers who are near the spot.

Christian institutions have benefited largely by the death of Mr. W. P. Hampton, house furnisher, of Pall Mall, who left estate of the value of £153,325. He gave £5,000 to the British Foreign Bible Society; £2,000 each to the London Missionary Society, Barnardo's Homes, and the Salvation Army, and smaller bequests to other organizations. This is a wholesale endowment of superstition.

As a result of the recent breakfast-table conference between the clergy and the Premier at Downing Street, there will shortly be a big pulpit campaign advocating self-sacrifice during the War. So a Sunday paper informs its readers. What the public would like to hear is what sacrifice the clergy themselves propose to make in the fourth year of the War. So far they have done nothing except give advice, often unsound.

No fewer than 200,000 out of 250,000 members of the Brotherhood Movement are serving their country, said Dr. Clifford, president of the movement. And, presumably, enforcing the idea of brotherhood at the point of the bayonet.

While cycling to church at Kingston-on-Thames, Annie Keane was run over by a motor-lorry and killed. Had she been on her way to a Freethought meeting, there would have been an awful and impressive moral.

Caradoc Evans, the author of *My People*, the novel which greatly annoyed Welsh Nonconformists, replies vigorously to one of his critics in a recent issue of *Everyman*. His critic, he says,—

is angry that I have discovered Welsh Nonconformity, showing the three evils by which it thrives: hypocrisy, brutality, lust. Its god is wicked and crafty; he rules by the hand of his preachers—black-coated, cunning rascals, whose avarice is never appeased. They demand offerings from the widow and the orphan, and they fill their stomachs and clothe their bodies as though they were princes in the land. Their arrogance is awful.....

Fashioned by such rulers, is it surprising that we are the most backward race in Europe? Spiritually and morally we are unsound. I know a Welshman who asked God to help him to cheat his brother. I know another who, while despoiling a young girl, sang one of Pantycelyn's hymns. I know another who committed a sin with the chapel-keeper in an open grave. I know a man who hated his sister so much that he set an angry bull upon her. I know a preacher who condoned incest in a member of his congregation and who practised it himself.....

We are as Welsh Nonconformity has made us. Not until the last chapel is a cowhouse and the last black-coated worker of abomination is hanged shall we set forth on our march to the light.

There is nothing wanting here in the direction of vigour. It is small wonder that young Wales, which is taking the task of education very seriously indeed, should be in a state of revolt against all the Churches.

A farmer, fined at Widnes for selling carcasses above the maximum price, made the excuse, "Everybody's doing it." "Pity 'tis, 'tis true." You can always trust Christians to rob one another.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, replying to a criticism that "spirits" needed clothes, said that "modesty does not cease with this life. Has it ever been the custom for any of the churches to describe the angels as nude?" This reminds us that some of the celestial visitors mentioned in the Bible had some of the qualities of Don Juan. Whilst it may be correct to say theologians do not describe angels as nude, it must be borne in mind that cherubs have nowhere to put any clothes.

Germany, says the *Church Times*, "is what Protestantism has made it. Protestantism is morally and spiritually bankrupt." This, after being told so frequently that the state of Germany was due to its rejection of Christianity. But if Protestantism is morally and spiritually bankrupt, we should like to know what form of Christianity is in a better condition?

Fireworks being prohibited on Guy Fawkes Day probably means the end of this once popular festival. It is interesting to recall that not until the middle of the nineteenth century was the Guy Fawkes service deleted from the Prayer Book.

Addressing the members of the National Liberal Club, Mr. Augustine Birrell urged that "everybody should dedicate some small part of each day to a good book, as, for example, Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of Tristram Shandy*." Oh, Mr. Birrell! Fancy Nonconformist politicians reading "Gibbon" and "Sterne," for the former was a Freethinker and the latter a Churchman.

The myth of a Germany formally repudiating Christianity,

and perpetrating all the atrocities with which it has stained its reputation as a consequence, is almost dead. The lie was too gross even for a time when credulity in some directions has surpassed itself. And the myth of our own soldiers made religious as a result of the War is rapidly breaking down. We have given numerous instances, from religious sources, of the carelessness of our men about religion, and our columns have provided evidence of the number who have formally repudiated religious belief since the War began. Now we see, from a report in the *Birmingham Gazette* of November 7, Canon Adderley admits that "the sense of prayer, of other worldliness, of mystery, is almost dead among our common people." And speaking of his experience in a hospital in France he says: "It was the German prisoners, with their little Christmas tapers by their bed-side—and they were Protestants, who seemed to be more mystical and other worldly than our own dear Tommies who mixed up "Tipperary" with "Hark, the Herald Angels Sing." We wish Canon Adderley had given his audience the actual words sung by many of the "deaf Tommies" to hymn tunes.

Evidence to the same end is given in "As Tommy Sees Us," by A. Herbert Gray. He says: "It remains true that the majority of men in our Army are almost quite indifferent to the Church, if not contemptuous about it.....It is an extraordinary thing how the average man dislikes ministers." This is quite a different picture from that drawn by the Bishop of London. He found the men quite eager to listen to parsons—at least, he said he found them so. And who are we that we should cast doubt upon the word of a Bishop?

Mr. Elliott O'Donnell, speaking at a meeting of the Psychological Research Society, suggested that "spirits" may be untruthful. Surely that is an open question. There is no doubt, however, that Spiritualists are not all George Washingtons.

The Rev. W. M. Pitcher, curate at Whitkirk, near Leeds, is reported in the *Yorkshire Evening Post* of November 5 to have said: "We will not follow a King who does not follow Christ, but we will follow the Kaiser if he follows Christ." This was said in connection with the proposed reform of the Divorce Laws. But all it means is that the Church will support anyone or anything that supports it. And there is nothing new. That is the policy of all the Churches.

Mr. Alfred Ewen, who has been for twenty-seven years Official Receiver at Northampton, is retiring from office under the age limit, and will enter "Holy Orders." He is to take up a curacy near Truro. This we regard as a direct instance of the fitness of things. Having had a long experience in winding up bankrupt concerns, we can foresee a busy time for Mr. Ewen in dealing with the Church.

The *Pall Mall Gazette* reports a meeting of the Congress of Christian Workmen, representing 1,750,000 members, of whom 737,000 are serving with the Army, which strongly condemned all peace talk as being against the interests of Germany. The Secretary declares: "We went to war by the side of the Kaiser and the Princes, and we will return side by side with them." We hope the Bishop of London will note the activity of his brother Christians in Germany.

"Our business is to see that the enemy starves before we do," says the *Daily Mail*. A beautiful and touching Christian sentiment!

The Rev. A. D. Belden, speaking at Leigh-on-Sea, said that "the broken condition of the Church before the War was evidenced in Disestablishment and the New Theology." What does the reverend gentleman mean? Disestablishment is not yet an accomplished fact, and the New Theology is as dead as Queen Anne. The statement is as confusing as the tangle of the Trinity.



## 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.

F. STEINER (New York).—Sorry both works are out of print. Pleased to have your good opinion of our reply to Mr. Clodd.

W. BARTON.—We are obliged for your good offices in getting new readers. We should say that if twenty out of one hundred soldiers said they had prayed, the proportion was a good one as things go. But we presume they did not have to produce evidence.

MR D. G. GLOAK (Dundee) writes that he is willing to act as agent for the receipt of all such commissions in connection with the support of the *Freethinker* as were undertaken by Mr. R. Stirton, whose death we recorded last week. Mr. Stirton was a staunch friend of this paper; we know he has a worthy successor in the case of Mr. Gloak.

MRS. E. TAYLOR.—Mr. Cohen will be delighted to meet you when he is again in Manchester, which will be on the first Sunday in January.

H. IRVING.—Sorry we couldn't find space for your note last week. It is hardly worth while reopening the matter now.

W. T. NEWMAN.—We are obliged. Shall be pleased to make an early use of your communication.

R. S.—We have no special organization for sending out literature to the men at the Front. We do send out a fair quantity, so far as our means permit, and we are pleased to know that it is read, and is evidently doing useful work.

H. BLACK.—We are not thinking of reprinting that particular article as a leaflet. But we do intend writing some special leaflets, so soon as we can get sufficient time from our other occupations.

T. DIXON.—Thanks for contribution to Fund, and good wishes for a good big total before the Fund closes.

T. CLONIN.—The value of Paley's theological writings is much greater of late years—owing to the increased price of waste paper.

MR. J. A. REID suggests that, when finished, readers should send their copies of the *Freethinker* to their local papers. That is an idea well worth following up.

J. B. SELBY.—A religious service cannot be "forced" at any funeral against the wishes of the next-of-kin. A burial without a service of any sort is quite in order, and many occur.

*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.*

## "Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

WE have one more issue of the *Freethinker* in which to acknowledge additions to this Fund, which means that all subscriptions should reach me by Tuesday, November 20, the day on which next week's issue goes to press. We are gratified at the prompt and generous response made to our appeal, and we continue to receive letters from readers, which serve as an added encouragement

to press on. We have not had space to quote from many of these of late, but we venture on two or three in this last time of writing.

Mr. W. Moore writes from Belfast:—

May I congratulate you on the sustained excellence of the paper these troublous times. It is a marvel how you "carry on" under present difficulties. Considering the number of periodicals that have gone under in the struggle, and the much greater number that have increased in price and decreased in size, you should feel extremely proud of your very fine work in the cause of Freethought. I sincerely hope sufficient will be contributed to free you from further anxiety until the end of next year. In my opinion, you have a big enough burden to bear without having to shoulder so much worry through lack of funds to obtain supplies.

"Deneb," in sending a further subscription, writes:—

In view of the fact that the King has decided to win the War at the latest by January 7 by means of a National Day of Prayer, I feel justified in dipping into my very limited funds and sending you a third small subscription.

That is a very prompt answer to the prayers that are to be offered. We hope the clergy will be satisfied.

From Captain Sinclair:—

To have kept the *Freethinker* going during these three years of War is a triumph, as signal as any ever achieved by our paper. It would be a thousand pities, now that you have so brilliantly conquered the ridges, if you were prevented peppering the enemy well through want of ammunition. Please find herewith a few bullets, and, believe me, it is not lack of will that prevents my sending a high explosive shell of the largest calibre.

C. C.

## Tenth List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £335 9s. 5d. T. Dixon, £1. W. Morris, 2s. 6d. A. Beale, 2s. 6d. Deneb, 5s. W. Moore, 2s. 1d. A. W. Davis, £1 10s. T. C. Riglin, 2s. 6d. H. Sinclair, 10s. J. B. Selby, 1s. W. T. Pitt, 10s. 6d. C. N. B., 2s. 1d. W. H. Quinlivan, 3s. J. E. Cooper, 1s. 6d. J. R. White, 2s. 6d. A. L. Pickering, 2s. 6d. R. B., 2s. 6d. J. B., 2s. 6d. Three Atheists (per F. Lonsdale, Glasgow), £1 1s. A. W. Coleman, 9s. 6d. D. F. Gloak, 4s. 6d. J. Thornby, 4s. Mrs. N. Wilcock, 2s. 6d. T. F. G., 2s. J. Smith, 1s. C. Heaton, 2s. 6d. R. W. Dowding, 5s.

Per H. Anderson, Leicester Secular Society: A. Wain, 2s. 6d.; H. Adkinson, 2s. 6d.; W. Leeson, 5s.; P. Wykes, 2s. 6d.; E. A. Wykes, 2s. 6d.; Mr. and Mrs. Richards, 2s.; J. Cartwright, 1s.; F. J. Smith, 2s.; H. E. A., 2s. 6d.; W. J. Marston, 2s. 6d.; Collected, 5s. Total, £344 14s. 11d.

## Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen lectures to-day in the Repertory Theatre, Station Street, Birmingham. The lecture commences at 7 o'clock. Subject: "Do the Dead Live?" Birmingham friends are looking forward to a crowded house, and we hope they will not be disappointed.

The Pioneer Press has just added to its list of bargains a volume that will be of interest to a large number of readers. This is *The Positive Evolution of Religion; Its Moral and Social Reaction*, by Mr. Frederic Harrison. Mr. Harrison has been for many years one of the leading Positivists in England, and the volume summarizes his—to use the author's words—"final thoughts in the general problem of religion." It is a sustained criticism of all forms of established supernaturalistic religion, and written in Mr. Harrison's attractive style. The work was published in 1913 at 8s. 6d. net, and is now offered for sale at 2s. 6d., postage 5d.

To-day (November 18) Mr. Lloyd lectures at the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick, Manchester. The afternoon meeting is at 3 o'clock; the evening at 6.30. We hope there will be a good rally of Freethinkers, and also of Christians. Both are sure to be repaid for their attendance. Tickets, 6d. and 1s., may be obtained from the hall-keeper, from 68 Tib Street, and from 46 Great Cheetham Street East, Higher Broughton. There are a few free seats. Tea will be provided for visitors from a distance.

We are pleased to learn that Mr. Lloyd's meetings on Sunday were highly successful. Mr. Lonsdale, Local N. S. S. Secretary, writes in high praise of both the audience and of Mr. Lloyd's lectures. In the evening a resolution, moved by Mr. Pairney and seconded by Mr. Howitt, protesting against the proposed "Day of Prayer" as being calculated to bring the country into ridicule, was moved and carried unanimously. Our Glasgow friends evidently had a field day, and we wish them many others.

The Secretary of the North London Branch asks us to draw the attention of our readers to the debate on "Nietzsche, the Immoralist," to be opened by Mr. A. D. Howell-Smith at the St. Pancras Reform Club at 7.30 this evening. No modern writer has been more widely misunderstood and misrepresented than Nietzsche, and Mr. Smith's careful study of the life and writings of the great philosopher has made him most competent to deal with the subject, and we hope the debate will be well attended. There will be ample opportunity for discussion.

English readers will welcome a translation of M. Deshumbert's *La Morale Fondée sur les Lois de la Nature*, under the title of *An Ethical System Based on the Laws of Nature*. The work is an able attempt to base morality upon natural considerations, and the author shows considerable ability in arguing his case, and great ingenuity in the illustrations he provides his readers. The only adverse criticism that may be passed upon the work is a too great a tendency to justify Nature to man, and the anthropomorphism involved in expressions about Nature's "aims" and "ends" and "desires." Nor is M. Deshumbert sufficiently alive to the consideration that things may be inevitable without their being desirable or admitting of justification. And the function of the naturalistic philosopher is not to justify Nature so much as it is to point out how man may control natural forces and direct them to his own betterment. M. Deshumbert achieves this task with considerable success, in spite of his laying himself open to criticism in other directions. The book is published by The Open Court Co. at 2s. 6d. net.

Owing to the vagaries of the Post Office, a parcel containing "copy," posted from Mr. Cohen's private address to the office, failed to reach its destination. This involved an unusual amount of writing on Tuesday (publishing day), and many letters have had to remain unanswered until next week in consequence.

#### OUR HEAVENLY FATHER.

Our love and hate have aims, but Thine  
Are idle bolts at random hurled;  
Impotent, hidden, yet divine,  
Brood o'er Thy broken-hearted world.

Cold to the prayer of human sorrow,  
Deaf to the sob of human strife,  
Thou workest grandly, night and morrow,  
On Thy great masterpiece of life!

For Thine own pleasure is it done,  
Since art's delight is in the doing;  
Thine own enjoyment, slowly won,  
Is the sole end Thou art pursuing.

—Robert Buchanan.

## The Everlasting Hills.

IN all countries and ages where the mountains have formed an imposing feature of the landscape, the myths and marvels of religion have largely centred themselves among the inaccessible peaks that rise from the plains beneath. Ruskin's eloquently expressed conviction that mountains "are as a great and noble architecture, first giving shelter, comfort, and rest; and covered also with mighty sculpture and painted legend" is a quite modern conception. Among primitive peoples, and even with the cultured Romans and Greeks, the hills were regarded with feelings of wonder and fear. In our more prosaic period when science has proved to us that the uplands, so long supposed to date from the world's beginning, are really quite recent in origin; when the very Alps are tunnelled, and the altitudes of the most majestic mountains are determined; when roads or railways approach or traverse the earth's noblest elevations; much of the old-time romance has been shattered, and then replaced in the instructed mind with far loftier concepts of the mountain ranges of the globe. We have discovered that

those desolate and threatening ranges which.....men have looked upon with aversion or with horror, and shrunk back from as if they were haunted by perpetual images of death, are in reality sources of life and happiness, far fuller and more beneficent than all the bright fruitfulness of the plain. The valleys only feed; the mountains feed and guard and strengthen us.—(Ruskin, *Modern Painters*).

The literary masterpieces of classic civilization provide abundant proof that the lowlands and valleys, the meandering rivers and lower eminences, with all their floral and faunal treasures, were themes which inspired the poets with thoughts sublime. But the mysterious mountains that seemed to ascend to heaven itself appeared too sacred for secular speculation, and were viewed as the everlasting abodes of the eternal gods. In their high dwelling-place the divinities ruled the winds, the thunder, the lightning, and the rain, for all these came from above. Unwilling for religious reasons to trespass upon holy ground, there was in addition small inducement to wander among the harsh and barren highlands in search of plant or animal food.

In the Dark Centuries of Christian ascendancy in Europe every secret place was the haunt of nymphs, fairies, elves, and other weird beings. Nor need we now travel outside our own islands to meet rustic communities which still cherish a firm belief in the existence of dwarfs, fairies, and other uncanny folk who preside over the destiny of hill and heath in England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales.

The children of Israel looked upon the mountains as the house of the Lord. On Mount Sinai Moses is reported to have received the Law from Jahveh, although owing to the long absence of their leader the people became restless, and demanded new gods which Aaron the priest promptly provided in the guise of the golden calf. Thus:—

Israel made their gods of gold  
Altho' the trumpet blew so loud.

In India the story is much the same. From the earliest ages the Himalayas have been venerated by the native races of Hindostan. As Hutchinson writes in his *Story of the Hills*:—

Thousands of people from all parts of that vast country still continue to seek salvation in the holy waters of the Ganges, and at its sacred sources in the snowy Himalayas. And to those who know India the wondrous snow-clad peaks of the Himalayas still seem to be surrounded with somewhat of the same halo of glory as of old.

Before the coming of the aviator's art, the possibilities of which we are only beginning to surmise, there was, probably, no more exhilarating experience available than that afforded by mountaineering. Those who have been privileged to enjoy the scenery, inhale the bracing breezes, and, at the close of a hard day's climbing among the Alps, or amid the rugged Scottish Highlands, have felt themselves ready to sleep, if necessary, on the hardest of stones, may be said to have truly lived. A sunset over the sea is unspeakably beautiful, but the effects of an Alpine sunset and afterglow, perhaps, defy portrayal, save from the pen of the poet, or the artist's brush. And when in the twilight of eve pale mists softly ascend, the peaks stand out in imperial grandeur, until the queen of night rising in the eastern sky sets her seal of loveliness alike on earth and heaven. Ruskin's worship of the mountains is displayed in many passages of deathless prose, while Wordsworth, one of the grandest of Nature poets, has immortalized the hills. The divine genius of Turner has transferred the painter's vision of mountain scenery to pictures precious beyond all praise. Tyndall's description of an Alpine evening is very striking:—

After sunset the purple of the east changed to a deep neutral tint; and against the faded red which spread above it, the sun-forsaken mountains laid their cold and ghostly heads. The ruddy colour vanished more and more; the stars strengthened in lustre, until finally the moon and they held undisputed possession of the blue sky.

There is no known instance of a mountain race that is destitute of the qualities of hardiness, physical power, and bravery. Their stern surroundings have stamped themselves upon the people. In such circumstances there is little chance for weaklings. These last are weeded out, and only those endowed with muscular strength and endurance are permitted to perpetuate the race. The fighting propensities of mountain stocks are notorious. The Balkan peninsula has long provided a mournful instance of this verity. The dwellers in the Afghan hills are famed for their fierceness in warfare. The martial spirit of the Scottish Highlanders continued to burst forth at the slightest provocation centuries after the Lowlanders had learnt to properly appreciate the blessings of peace. Although other factors are unquestionably involved in the maintenance of the martial spirit, there can be little doubt that a mountainous environment promotes the passion for adventure, a passion that is closely related to the readiness for strife.

Professor Bonney, in his instructive *Alpine Regions of Switzerland*, has adduced a number of quaint superstitions which still prevail in what Leslie Stephen termed "the playground of Europe." Credulous peasants solemnly attest that they hear the wail of the wild huntsman as he and his spectral companions rush past the solitary chalet. Then there is the bold, bad boy who crucified an aged male goat, and compelled the herd to worship it. As a penalty for his sin the wicked youth was smitten by lightning, and ever since he has wandered among the mountains bewailing his crime. Satan himself figures in these legends, and ghostly animals, brownies, and pigmies are common, while traditions of the havoc occasioned by the fall of rocks and avalanches have given birth to a host of fabulous beliefs.

Men marvelled in antiquity when Hannibal invaded Italy by crossing the Alps, and many centuries later Napoleon's successful march over the same formidable barrier was the occasion of much astonishment. Nevertheless, mountain ranges have in all ages served to separate State from State. One need only to glance at the map to note the extent to which elevated areas and

rivers have operated in establishing political boundaries. Austria's chief defence against the armies of Italy consisted in her Alpine barrier. The possession of the heights is immensely important just now on the Western Front. The Pyrenees separate France and Spain. England and Scotland again are divided by the Cheviots in conjunction with the Tweed.

Our planet's true mountain masses are the huge continents which rise above the level of the sea, for, in comparison with these, our mountain chains are insignificant wrinkles. But, although when related to the entire earth, our elevations are so small, yet, to a little land mammal like man they appear supremely great. Still, however inferior absolutely, relatively the mountains are sufficiently important to exercise a potent influence on animal and vegetable life. The average annual snowfall on the Alps is estimated at 33 feet. Were this snow to accumulate from year to year by the end of a century the height of these mountains would increase to the extent of 3,300 feet. But much of the snow is melted by the sun and evaporated by the action of the atmosphere, while, above all, stupendous snow fields gradually sweep down the declivities and become transformed into rivers of ice whose terminals are thawed by the warmer air which embraces them, thus producing the glacier streams which course down the hills.

The sublimities of these magnificent mountains are tempered by their terrors. At certain seasons of the year the avalanche is a source of constant dread to the Alpine population, although familiarity with the ever present danger tends to promote a spirit of resignation. The avalanche is classified into three kinds. The fury of the first of these is expended on the mountains with little harm to man. The minor glaciers in the upper Alpine regions frequently end abruptly on the margin of a precipice. This arrested ice is subjected to the pressure of the growing masses of ice above it until it is dashed down the cliffs. The fall of these crystalline masses is a wonderful sight, and when the great cloud of powdered snow has disappeared below, and silence once more reigns, "the thunder of the avalanche is suddenly heard reverberating in deep echoes in the mountain gorges, as if it were the voice of the mountain itself."

In winter the fresh fallen snow, when disturbed, slides down the declivities and overwhelms the valley beneath. From time to time whole villages have been buried in huge graves of snow with tragic results. This is the second or dust avalanche.

The third variety of avalanche is the ground avalanche which is caused by the descent of dense and indurated masses of weathered snow. The ground avalanche is the most destructive, and trees are thickly planted on the mountain slopes to prevent its fall. The Swiss death-roll from these catastrophes is a serious one. In the Rhone valley in 1720 one of these accidents caused the death of eighty-eight human beings, the destruction of 120 cottages, and the loss of 400 head of cattle.

(To be continued.) T. F. PALMER.

Science, no less than common sense, dispels Christian superstition. Evolution destroys the idea of a general catastrophe. There was a time when life could not exist on the earth, and there will probably come a time when it will cease to exist. Long before then man will have disappeared. But the æon of our race may extend to millions of years. Is not this time practically infinite? And do not those who make it a cause for lamentation and despair resemble the man that Spinoza ridicules, who refuses to eat his dinner to-day because he is not sure of a dinner for ever and ever? Sit down, you fool, and eat.

## The Church and Liberty.

MANY who think Mr. G. K. Chesterton most impossible as a philosopher, historian, and publicist, will agree that he is hard to beat as a poet and a rhetorician. He once wrote a poem on the English working-classes which contained these lines:—

Smile at us, pay us, pass us; but do not quite forget,  
For we are the people of England, that never has spoken yet.

There are no folk in the whole world so helpless or so wise.  
There is hunger in our bellies, there is laughter in our eyes;  
You laugh at us and love us, both mugs and eyes are wet:  
Only you do not know us. For we have not spoken yet.

Mr. Chesterton's *Short History of England*, just published, is an essay in amplification of this poem. I have read the book and several reviews of it, including a very stupid review in the *Morning Post*. That review exhibits the ignorance of its writer by denouncing Mr. Chesterton's *History* as a revolutionary Socialist pamphlet. Socialists and Freethinkers differ from Mr. Chesterton more profoundly than the *Morning Post* does, and they will know better than that. What his book reveals to me, at any rate, is simply the extraordinary limitation of his understanding. Again and again, in the course of it, he has occasion to refer to some important movement, which he not only does not understand, but which he seems too lazy or too impatient to try to understand. It is not surprising to find him failing in this way to understand Mohammedanism, or Puritanism, or modern science. But we open our eyes when he apparently fails to understand the French Revolution, in which he has always posed as something of a specialist; and when it turns out that he does not even understand the Christian religion, of which he is a distinguished champion, we feel instinctively for a penny that we may present him with the proverbial bun.

The thesis of Mr. Chesterton, on which his book centres, is that the liberties of the English people were created by Catholic Christianity, and destroyed by the rejection of Catholic Christianity. He naturally begins with the old assertion that the Church put an end to slavery; and not content with this historical misrepresentation, he gives reasons *a priori* why it had to be true. Christianity, he tells us, "was the most revolutionary of all revolutions, since it identified the dead body on a servile gibbet with the fatherhood in the skies." I am afraid that if Mr. Chesterton had written this when Catholic dogma was a living force, instead of a mere political convenience as now, he would have been sharply dealt with as a Sabellian, or, at the very least, as a Monophysite. It would have been more profitable if, instead of explaining what the Church should, *a priori*, have taught about slavery, and explaining it wrongly, Mr. Chesterton had told us simply what it *did* teach.

At no period of its history has the Catholic Church declared slavery to be wrong. Paul exhorts slaves to be obedient, and masters to be kind to their slaves; he nowhere enjoins emancipation. Between the time of Paul and the establishment of Christianity as the religion of the Roman Empire, slavery had considerably weakened from economic causes. The high-water mark of ancient slavery was about the date of the Christian era, when the rapid expansion of the Roman Empire by successful war had thrown on the market a flood of captives of all races, and made slaves a cheap and profitable investment. When Rome ceased to extend her conquests, slavery ceased to be so cheap or profitable. As the basis of industry, the institution had serious disadvantages. Slaves could not be trusted to perform other than the most elementary and least skilled tasks, to which they could be kept by the whip of the overseer. Hence

ancient slavery lasted longest on agricultural estates; and even there the soil was ruined by this form of cultivation. By the time Christianity became politically supreme, the effects of these disadvantages were being felt, and slavery was slowly receding before serfdom. The last traces of slavery, however, as distinct from serfdom, did not disappear from Europe until the twelfth century. That the much-praised "efforts" of the Church should have taken eight centuries to extinguish an institution, which was already on the down-grade economically, does not say much for the seriousness with which the Church went to work on this question. That the Church had no rooted objection to slavery is, moreover, proved by the fact of its revival, with the blessing of the Church, so soon as European nations began to seek expansion in the East, and later in the New World. Negro slavery, in the modern world, began with the conquests of Catholic Portugal and Catholic Spain.

The place of slavery in Europe as the basis of society was taken by serfdom; that is, instead of the labourer being a chattel to be bought and sold, he became a fixture on the soil, with a right to his holding subject to the due performance of various services to the feudal lord. Mr. Chesterton, not being able to make out that the Church was opposed to serfdom, has to argue that serfdom was really rather a good thing. The serf "could not be evicted; he could not even, in the modern fashion, have his rent raised. At the beginning it was merely that the slave was owned, but at least he could not be disowned. At the end he had really become a small landlord, merely because it was not the lord that owned him, but the land. It is hardly unsafe to suggest that in this (by one of the paradoxes of this extraordinary period) the very fixity of serfdom was a service to freedom." We would be the last to deny that there is something in all this; serfdom *was* an improvement on slavery. But how Mr. Chesterton would foam at the mouth if anyone ventured to apply similar reasoning to modern social conditions! In dealing with modern social reform, he continually harps on the theme that the tendency of such measures as Workmen's Compensation and Old Age Pensions is, not to make the wage-earner cease to be a wage-earner, but to enable "employees to claim certain advantages *as* employees, and as something permanently different from employers"—which he calls "the Servile State." Surely, on Mr. Chesterton's own principles, the modern social reformer might reply that in securing the worker against unemployment, and providing him with a minimum wage, we should make for liberty and not for slavery. "At the end he would really become a small capitalist, merely because it would not be the employer who owned him, but the industry. It is hardly unsafe to suggest that in this (by one of the paradoxes of this extraordinary period) the very fixity of employment would be a service to freedom." Mr. Chesterton's argument!

This, however, is a digression, which I permit myself to make because I cannot resist the temptation of cornering Mr. Chesterton on his favourite battle-ground. To return to the Church and mediæval serfdom. The Church, no doubt, could not reasonably be expected to oppose the system from the outset; but we are fairly entitled to scrutinize the attitude of the Church when others began to attack it in the interests of freedom. In describing the great peasant rising of 1381, Mr. Chesterton significantly omits all reference to the attitude of the Church. Let me supply the omission. John Ball, the prime mover of the revolt, was a heterodox priest, who had been imprisoned by the Archbishop of Canterbury for the tendencies of his sermons. The whole official influence of the Church was on the side of repression.

The Archbishop was beheaded by the peasants when they were masters of London. After the betrayal and suppression of the insurgents, in which the Church gleefully assisted, her representatives in Parliament, the abbots and bishops, joined with barons and knights in declaring that their serfs were their goods, and that they would never consent to free them. All this Mr. Chesterton omits.

He suggests that the unpopularity of the Catholic system was started by the "diseased energy" of the fifteenth century bishops who persecuted the Lollards. It is very gratifying to find that Mr. Chesterton's Catholicism actually permits him to express a mild disapproval of persecution. The unpopularity of the Church, however, dated from before the persecution of the Lollards. What the laity thought of the clergy in the later Middle Ages may be gathered from Chaucer's descriptions of the "summoner" and "pardoner," and from the satire of Langland. The guilt was off the Catholic gingerbread. The Church had sponged on society for centuries, and swallowed the livelihood of the poor and the abundance of the rich with equal avidity, on the pretence of being able, for these considerations, to insure people against everlasting torture by slow fire after death. Men were beginning to doubt if this claim was well founded—that was all.

Mr. Chesterton speaks of it as "a commonplace" that the monks "kept the world's diary, faced the plagues of all flesh, taught the first technical arts, preserved the pagan literature, and, above all, by a perpetual patchwork of charity, kept the poor from the most distant sight of their modern despair." There is an element of truth in this. The monks "kept the world's diary"—that is, they belauded every potentate who endowed them, no matter how ruffianly, and vilified every potentate who flouted them, no matter how beneficent. They "faced the plagues of all flesh"—after doing a great deal to aggravate them by their filthy cult of dirt for dirt's sake, of which we have abundant records in the lives of the saints. They "preserved the pagan literature"—so much of it, at least, as they did not destroy, or deface by scrawling their wretched martyrological romances over the original.

I must pass over Mr. Chesterton's modern history, much as I should like to dissect it. His essential perversion is summed up in that passage where, after attributing "complete and complacent paganism" to the English ruling class of the eighteenth century, he calls the French Revolution "a riot that broke up the very formal funeral of Christianity, and was followed by various other complications, including the corpse coming to life." No one would guess, from Mr. Chesterton's references to it, that the French Revolution, so far from being a revival of Christianity, was the culmination of eighteenth century scepticism; that its precursors, Voltaire and Rousseau, were the men of whom Dr. Johnson said that "it was difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them"; that the Revolution confiscated the estates of the Church in France, just as Henry VIII. had confiscated the estates of the Church in England, only far more completely; that relics were burnt and churches smashed by the Revolutionists in France, as by the Puritans in England; that the Englishmen of the nineteenth century who *did* try to revive Catholicism, such as Newman, loathed the Revolution and all its works; and that a modern stanza added to the revolutionary song, "La Carmagnole," runs as follows:—

Que demande un republicain ?  
Vivre et mourir sans calotin :  
Le Christ a la voirie,  
La Vierge a l'ecurie,

Et le Saint-Pere au diable—  
Vive le son, vive le son—  
Et le Saint-Pere au diable—  
Vive le son du canon !

ROBERT ARCH.

### Economic Superstition.

THE total of the world's War Debts now exceeds £25,000,000,000, and will probably be the double of that before the War is over. Moreover, every £1 subscribed now will be worth £2 when the present universal inflation of the currency is overtaken by the productive labour of the millions of workers now engaged in nothing but destructive work.

The population of the world is estimated at 1,640 millions, so that allowing one millionaire to every million would give 1,640 millionaires. Many of these, however, are multi-millionaires, e.g., John D. Rockefeller is said to have control of £100,000,000, and there are some thousands of men with fortunes but little less than £1,000,000. I am, therefore, not far out when I say that about 25,000 persons own £25,000,000,000.

Now these cosmopolitan millionaires, among whom are several German-Jews, have trustworthy agents in every country, and by their control of the currency they make a prey of every public enterprise. Peaceful enterprises now being at a standstill, they have, of course, subscribed largely to all the War Loans, of which they very likely now hold one half, amounting to £25,000,000,000. And as inflation is overtaken, this holding will increase to £50,000,000,000 without any effort on their part, not even the signing of another cheque. In a few years, therefore, the workers of the world, including, of course, all the professional classes, will find themselves confronted with a fraudulent War Debt of £50,000,000,000, compelling them to contribute goods and services of the value of £2,500,000,000 annually to these 25,000 millionaires.

Tolstoy said that the rouble would be made a more powerful instrument of oppression than the knout, and our professional classes, with an income tax of 10s. in the £ for many years to come, are likely to have this driven well home. Every worker in the world will be the virtual slave, for one half of every working day, of these millionaires who are quite able to evade any attempt to impose an adequate super-tax on their huge unearned incomes. On p. 128 of his *Trade Fallacies*, Mr. Arthur Kitson says: "The late Pierpoint Morgan could make and unmake whom he chose, and woe to the man who opposed him! His power far exceeded that of the President of the United States."

Their mode of operation is quite simple, e.g., the Government wants £950,000 to pay the soldiers. It gives an Exchequer Bond for £1,000,000 to Midas and receives in exchange his cheque for £950,000. The Government then cashes this cheque at the bank and receives 950,000 Currency Notes for £1 each, which it has itself given to the bank to save it from bankruptcy. Besides that the Government undertakes to pay Midas £50,000 annually until it can repay him the £1,000,000 which he has not advanced. Socialism has been described as something for nothing, so Midas must be a Socialist of a very pronounced type.

Now, an Exchequer Bond for £1,000,000 is a promise to pay bearer goods and services of that value, based on the honour and productive power of the British Empire. A Currency Note for £1 is precisely the same for the smaller amount, and both are, therefore, the best kind of money now in circulation.

On the other hand, Midas' cheque for £950,000 is an order to his bank to pay the Government £950,000 in

gold, which he knows the bank has not got, and even if it had, it would be of no more use than the Government's own Currency Notes, because both are merely so many contrivances for enabling the soldiers to obtain the goods and services they are entitled to. Thus we see another striking analogy between the twin superstitious beliefs in God and gold.

Here is some common bread and wine; a priest of God mutters some unmeaning words over them, and lo! they have become the actual flesh and blood of the useless God, and the poor devotee will gratefully hand over a large part of his hard-earned wealth for the imaginary service thus rendered to him by the priest of the useless God. Here is a piece of common paper, on which Midas writes a few untruthful words, and the poor devotee, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, gives him £50,000 of the people's hard-earned wages and an annuity of £50,000 for many years to come; and not one out of every ten thousand educated men can see anything queer in this performance—nay, positively resents any interference with it as destructive of the Empire! It has been well said that when God flies in at the window, common sense walks out at the door; and the same may be truthfully remarked about gold.<sup>1</sup>

G. O. WARREN, Major.

#### ANECDOTAL.

Being junior curate in this gigantic parish of 20,000 souls I was allotted to the old women's almshouses; the old women there were the joy of my life. One of them was ninety-five years of age, exactly seventy years my senior, and she ruled the clergy, and especially myself, with a rod of iron. One snowy midnight I received an urgent summons to her bedside, and I hastened thither, fully expecting she might be dead by the time I reached her. Nothing of the kind.

"A nice time you've been, Mr. Blackpool"—they never could manage my name, anything with a B and two syllables served their purpose—that was her greeting. "I want yer to wind that yer eight-day clock o' mine."

"What, at one in the morning!" I indignantly cried. "Drag me out of bed into the snow to wind up your confounded old clock! Really, it's too bad of you, Mrs. Johnson."

"Nice language for a parson!" she ejaculated; raising her eyes to the heavens with irritating piety. "Yes, Mr. Brassplate, wind up my clock; them's my very words. The vicar says 'isself, the very last time he was 'ere, you was to do anything I required. Them's his orders, and well you knows it, Mr. Blackpool! So there's no good swearin' about it, which I don't 'old with parsons usin' such disgustin' language in my 'ouse. I allus tells a servant-gal wot I thinks of her, straight and done with it, and I allus tell a curick the same; then you know where you are!"

Of course, one wasn't not only one little bit angry with the dear old soul; but, as a matter of fact, I absolutely enjoyed her violent denunciations of me.—*Raymond Blathwayt, "Through Life and Round the World."*

#### Obituary.

It is with regret we report the death of Mr. Alfred W. M. Buscall, of 46 Newington Green Road, London, N., which occurred on November 6, in the 72nd year of his age. Mr. Buscall was a working member of the Mildmay Radical Club for upwards of twenty years. He was also a convinced Atheist, and made no secret of the fact. He left a will in which he requested the Secretary of the Club to arrange for a Secular Service at his funeral, which was accordingly done. He was held in high esteem by those who knew him. His burial took place at St. Pancras Cemetery on Friday, Nov. 9, in the presence of relations and friends.—J. T. LLOYD.

<sup>1</sup> Exchequer Bonds are now being used as currency, and by simply making them legal tender, the same as currency notes, the huge fictitious War Debt can be cancelled and every British worker's home relieved from the incubus that now threatens it.

## 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.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (44 Jenner Road, Stoke Newington): Nov. 15, at 7.30, Meeting of Members. Business: Election of Auditors and Discussion of Conference Report.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "Nietzsche the Immoralist." Open debate.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Tube Station): 7, T. F. Palmer, "Christianity at the Bar of History."

#### OUTDOOR.

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

### COUNTRY.

#### INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, C. Cohen, "Do the Dead Live?"

NEW MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick): J. T. Lloyd, 3, "Humanism Our Only Hope"; 6.30, "Self-reliance v. Trust in God."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, Fowler Street): 3, "(a) London Conference; (b) Separation and Divorce."

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