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Views and Opinions.

Boloism.

"Bolo" is the word of the hour. It has taken its place as one of the many words, sinister or otherwise, given us by the War, and is a new name for an old thing. There is nothing new in men selling their services for a cash equivalent, nor in the consequent manipulation of public opinion. It occurs at all times, and thrives lustily during a war period. During the French revolutionary period the French saw English gold everywhere, and "Pitt's money" became a veritable bugbear. To-day German gold occupies the same position. Mr. Lloyd George warns us to look out for "Boloism" in all its forms, and our flesh is made to creep by the pictures of German emissaries bribing men and women right and left to sell the interests of their country. Hair-raising revelations are foreshadowed, without materialization, and one is left marvelling at the wickedness of human nature, and at the almost criminal negligence of a Government which fails to lay by the heels people who so vilely sell the interests of the community to which they belong.

* * *

The Day of Prayer.

If "Boloism" had to do only with the world of politics, we should not concern ourselves with it here. Indeed, if the only Boloism were political boloism, we should be inclined to dismiss it with the reflection that it is in its proper habitat. But it covers a much wider sphere. Two or three weeks ago, in commenting upon the number of clergymen entertained at breakfast by Mr. Lloyd George, we warned our readers to be on the lookout for developments. These have not been long in coming. The King has issued a "Call for United Prayer." But it is a part of our constitution that the King acts only by and with the advice of his ministers. That relieves the King of responsibility—and dooms him to impotence. And, therefore, although it can only be a suspicion, we may be excused the assumption that this is one of the developments we anticipated. Moreover, Mr. H. W. Gooch, Secretary of the World's Evangelical

Alliance, has announced that a national day of prayer has been considered by the War Cabinet and by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and a statement from Mr. Lloyd George may be expected. The clergy do not give something for nothing. They are the profiteers of the spiritual world. If they are to help the Government the Government must help them. Very early in the days of Christianity one of the disciples of Jesus sold his services to the enemy for thirty pieces of silver. Judas was the first Christian Boloist. And the professional Christian preacher is, in the main, descended from that stock. The price has gone up; that is the main difference.

* *

The Day of Prayer.

January 6, 1918, is fixed for a special day of "prayer and thanksgiving." Thanksgiving! For what? Is it thanksgiving for the overrunning by Germany of Belgium, of France, of Poland, of Serbia, of Roumania, of Italy? Or are we to thank God that, while he has not preserved these countries, he has preserved us from a like calamity? Thanks to the men who have stood between us and disaster we can understand, and such gratitude is richly deserved. But thanks to God! That is a dangerous experiment. It may invite reflection, and people may ask what it is they have to thank God for. And why a day of prayer by command? Anyone can pray who wants to. And voluntary service, even in prayer, looks better, and is better than conscription. Perhaps it is thought that as heaven is obdurate against individual sniping, it may yield to a mass attack. Everybody praying at once may be more effective than each one praying separately; and "high heaven" dazed into complaisance by the concerted din of millions of animated praying machines, may yield to noise the assistance it declines to human necessity. Above all, it will enable the clergy to pretend they are playing a useful part in the national life, and they will be able to present to the world a picture of Britain animated by the spirit of prayer and filled with a zeal for religion. In a world stricken with a great sorrow there is, perhaps, something to be said for even that poor joke.

* * *

Our Christian Bolos.

Now, I call this "Boloism" because the Day of Prayer, if carried through, will represent no more than the efforts of an interested professional priesthood. In this respect the Christian clergy represent the greatest organization of Boloism in the world. Germany spends, it is said, large sums of money all over the world in creating and fostering a public opinion favourable to its own designs. But what is this beside the millions spent every year by the Christian Churches to the same end? What opinion is there that would not secure champions under the same conditions? Christianity buys its defenders, and its emissaries are largely advocates arguing a brief, not men stating a conviction. As Boloism buys its advocates, so does Christianity. As Boloism corrupts the press, so does Christianity. As Boloism, by the suppression of facts, by the dis-

semination of falsehoods, by the cultivation of an artificially created opinion, is able to represent the product as the expression of a normal and healthy conviction, so is Christianity. Look out for Boloism in all its forms, cries Mr. Lloyd George. That is good advice; only let us bear in mind that it has wider and more permanent application than Germany and the War. Let us by all means make a clean sweep of our Bolos—and let us not forget the pulpit in the course of our operations.

* * *

Boloism and the Poor.

As our religious Boloism buys one class, so it bribes another. Consider the intense anxiety of the Churches to control the charities of the world! Careless, criminally careless, of the causes of extreme poverty, they are feverishly anxious to control the distribution of money given to meet some of its consequences. Some years back, Mr. Charles Booth, in his great survey of London life, spoke of the churches competing with all the eagerness of commercial travellers for the patronage of the poor. The purpose is patent. To share in these charities, attendance at church is imperative. In that way only are the poor known to the parson, and considered properly deserving. The church or chapel "mumper" is a well-known character in all poor districts. There is small wonder that the more far-seeing of the leaders of the working classes see in the church-controlled charities a fruitful cause of demoralization. Servility and acquiescence in religious formulæ become the condition of relief. Servility takes the place of independence. The support of the poor is purchased by the bribe of charity, just as surely as the advocacy of the better educated is purchased by the funds which the Churches have at their disposal. The removal of all endowed charities from the control of the Churches would strike a deadly blow at the prevalence of Christianity among the poor.

* * *

Boloism in Education.

Only one more example can now be given of the prevalence of "Boloism" in connection with Christianity. Much has been heard of late on the subject of education. And it is being urged, none too soon, that the position of the teacher should be surrounded with all due honour and importance, while he should bring to his work a character marked by dignity and independence. What are the facts? All over the country there are large numbers of teachers who are convinced of the inutility, if not the positive harm, of religious education in schools. There is another section which, while believing in Christianity, would willingly leave it out of the school course, recognizing that, in the present state of society, it should be given, if at all, in other than school hours and by hands other than theirs. And yet how few of these teachers dare say what they really think on the subject of religious education. Everyone knows that for them to speak out would mean endless annoyance at the hands of petty councils and managers and inspectors, with a loss of promotion, if not of position. How can we expect the right kind of teacher under such conditions? The better type is largely eliminated. The subservient chiefly remain; while those who assert their independence pay a price they should never be called upon to pay. The power of the purse is again in evidence in the interests of Christianity. It is a case of Boloism in the schools. It buys the advocacy of one class, it bribes the sullen acquiescence of another, and it crows yet a third class into silence. Let us, to again quote Mr. Lloyd George, beware of Boloism in all its forms, and let us bear in mind that its political aspect is neither the only, nor the most dangerous, form of its activity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

"The Impetuous Lord."

ST. AUGUSTINE maintains that God is wholly everywhere, yet so that nothing contains the whole of him. The whole of God is in this room, but the whole of him is in every other room as well. According to this doctrine, nothing can be more absurd than the habit of praying for his presence. At religious meetings it seems to be taken for granted that the Lord is absent, for the burden of every prayer is, "Come to us, O God," or "Make thy presence felt." In his *Confessions*, St. Augustine gives expression to the unreasonableness of many of the petitions addressed to Heaven. He says: "And how shall I call upon my God, my God and Lord? For in truth when I call upon him I call him to enter into me.....Why then do I pray that thou shouldst enter into me seeing that I also am? For I should not be, if thou wert not in me." In an article entitled "The Impetuous Lord" in the *Christian World* for November 15, the Rev. Herbert Brook says that some Christians do not need to look forward to the second coming of Christ because they "are thrilled, subdued, solemnized, by the deep conviction and experience that he is already here. The prospect of our Lord's future advent is an alluring vision, but the certainty of his contemporary presence is a living, fruitful, working faith." And yet Mr. Brook himself appears to ignore this alleged truth in this very article. He assures us that "many of our painters and artists are obsessed with the idea of Christ's presence in our midst." He thinks that this is specially the case with pictures painted during the War:—

In one scene Christ stands near the young widow who has lost her young husband in battle—and their sturdy boy is playing unconcernedly on the bed. In another, he is near to the young lad lying dead in the trench—with his face upturned to the stars.....Such pictures are plentiful, and one feels that they would not be painted if they did not express and satisfy some deep conviction and experience in modern life.

Mr. Brooks singles Mr. H. G. Wells out as a man of letters who "is obsessed with an idea that is somewhat similar to that of the painters." He reads *Mr. Britling Sees It Through* in the light of Mr. Wells' later work, *God the Invisible King*, in which is expressed the author's faith in an ever-present Deity of some sort.

But later on in the article Mr. Brook forgets the Divine omnipresence, and speaks of the Lord's peripatetic habit. No other interpretation can be put on the following words: "Prepare ye in the wilderness the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a high way for our God." Evidently the whole of Jehovah was not everywhere, and Mr. Brook is of opinion that the same limitation applies to the Christian God. He says:—

What can we Christians do to help him in his work? Surely one great task is literally to prepare the pathways for the feet of our Lord.....They are the paths that Christ treads. Christ is to be met on them, just as surely as the disciples met Christ on the lonely path leading to Emmaus.

The idea of helping God in his work is preposterous in the extreme. Surely if God existed he would require no help to do his work. Clergymen sometimes admit that he *could* do without their services well enough, but that in his infinite wisdom and mercy he had seen fit to confer upon them the honour of being his helpers. What is meant by preparing the ways of the Lord we are not told; but the fact that he is supposed to have ways shows that he is by no means omnipresent. Mr. Brook tells us that "Make his paths straight" would be more accurately rendered thus, "Make his paths easy to run on"; but he does not inform us what to make them easy

to run on signifies, or how it can be done. From the new version, however, he draws the inference that the Lord is in a big hurry to accomplish his work:—

What kind of Lord is he who treads these well-worn by-paths? Obviously an eager and impetuous Lord. Some people seem to think of the Divine One as always moving through the world with leisurely and unhurried tread.....We get the inspiring interpretation, "Make the well-worn by-paths easy to run on." Why should this be done? Because the paths must be prepared for the passing, not of a leisurely, slow moving, but an eager, impetuous Lord. Christ is eager to get there..... Is not that the true picture of our Lord—eager, impetuous, anxious to reach the sinful, the repentant, the bereaved, the lonely? Make his well-worn paths easy to run on—that is the duty of all modern Christians.

In a closing sentence Mr. Brook ventures to point out that we can make God's paths straight by doing the work which he alone is usually supposed to be able to perform. We are called upon to blast national or individual sins into fragments by the dynamite of righteous denunciation and to awaken indifferent churches out of their lethargy. In other words, we must set a disjointed world right before the Lord can come to us. Furthermore, "here are ourselves, cold, hard, cynical, unbelieving—always standing in the way of the eager advance of an impetuous Lord—let us get off the path." When we shall have done the work, then God will appear and receive all the glory.

The portrait of God presented to us in Mr. Brook's article is by no means a flattering one. He is at once omnipresent and a traveller; omnipotent and yet dependent upon us. The whole of him is everywhere, and yet there are paths along which he moves: He is eager, impetuous, anxious to reach the sinful, the repentant, the bereaved, the lonely, and yet after nineteen centuries of his so-called redeeming career the world is still groaning under its sin and misery. The only inference we can intelligently make is that, like King Arthur and his Round Table, he and his salvation are merely the creation of the religious imagination. It is delightfully easy to talk and write about him with the utmost cocksureness; but not one of his official representatives has ever adduced the slightest evidence of his objective existence. They pray to him; they claim to be his spokesmen, whilst delivering messages entrusted to them by him; whilst nominally giving him the credit for all their accomplishments, they hold him responsible for all their blunders and failures; but they have not a single shred of proof that he exists at all. The work they do is his; it is his cause that they have at heart, and the money they collect is for him. Ministers often excuse themselves for begging so pressingly for liberal contributions, on the ground that it is the Lord who needs them. Now, there are people who verily believe that all religious work is the Lord's and that the money spent in carrying it on is money given to the Lord; but ministers not a few are fully aware of the hypocritical character of all such representations. They know only too well that the Church has never been what she pretends to be, and that what she calls God's work is wholly her own. As already stated, the Church and her work are of such a nature and on such a scale that the Christian God, if he existed, could not think of them except with infinite shame. The only possible conclusion is that the Christian God is a myth, and that the Church is an exclusively human institution. Mr. Brook's "impetuous Lord" has never made his appearance, and his anxiety to reach and save mankind is an empty dream of the pulpit. Had he been a living reality there would have been no need of the Church and her ministrations. He would have done the work himself with complete success. The

pulpit has been necessary simply because of the absolute powerlessness of the supernatural. The need for preaching testifies to the non-existence of the Holy Ghost.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Genius of "George Sand."

Authors who have influence are merely those who express perfectly what other men are thinking; who reveal in people's minds ideas or sentiments which were tending to the birth.

—Joseph Joubert.

AMONG the cheap reprints of the works of the French classic authors it is doubtful if there has been one that is more satisfactory than the fine edition of some of the works of "George Sand," which has been issued by the enterprising house of Messrs. George Bell & Co. Beautifully printed, and finely illustrated, these books form a welcome addition to any bookshelf.

Literary reputations are set up and demolished with such provoking rapidity, that it is pleasant to turn to a really great writer who is beyond the reach of the journalistic turmoil of the day. Long ago, Sainte-Beuve, the prince of critics, placed "George Sand" at the head of the then living French writers. How far "George Sand" deserved the exact place indicated by the foremost of French critics we cannot venture to determine, but her name has since been inscribed among the Olympians.

The life-story of Amantine Dupin, better known by her pen-name of "George Sand," is a veritable romance. She was a descendant of the famous Marshal Saxe, a natural son of Augustus of Poland, and one of the bravest of Marlborough's companions-in-arms. Little Amantine was brought up by a grandmother, and a tutor who held Voltairian views; consequently, she was left with no religious teaching at all during her early years. Some stories, impartially told her, of Jupiter and Christ, and other mythical personages, were all the theology that she remembered at this time. At the age of ten, with the precocity of genius, she had invented a god of her own, but this deity was dethroned as she grew older. Unfortunately, the young girl was sent to a convent school at Paris to complete her education. The Christian superstition was there presented in its most winning form by the nuns, who adapted themselves to her highly imaginative and sympathetic nature.

After two years' pressure the poor girl succumbed, and was on the verge of spoiling her life by taking the veil. Her grandmother became seriously alarmed, and removed the girl not a moment too soon. The nuns had done their work only too well, and Mdlle. Dupin's faith and her wish to renounce a life of which she was wholly ignorant, persisted long after the gates of the convent had closed behind her.

She was not like other girls, however. Her mind was too virile to be permanently affected by priests' opium. Recovery came slowly, but surely. Her first shock came from reading Chateaubriand's *Genie du Christianisme*, a book, unwittingly, recommended by her unsuspecting confessor. She found the ideas so antagonistic to her preconceived views founded on the *Imitatio Christi*, that she was led finally to doubt the truth and unity of a religious system which could thus be expounded in two different senses. She then glided gently and imperceptibly into Freethought.

Family troubles supervened. Her grandmother died, and her home was broken up. Her father's family was alienated by her mother's relations. Her mother, who should have been her best friend, proved to be the worst guardian possible to such a girl. In her pitiable distress, deserted by her own kindred, Mdlle. Dupin committed

the great mistake of her life. A few years before she had, by the help of her sceptical grandmother, escaped from the life-long imprisonment of a convent. Her wise old counsellor was now dead, and she wrecked, unknowingly, her life on a marriage of convenience. Only eighteen years of age, troubled and lonely, she allowed Baron Dudevant to persuade her that he would be a true friend, and, in an evil moment, she married him. She never loved him, and he never loved anybody but himself. He got drunk, kept low company, and was a beast. He found his wife's cleverness a nuisance. After nine years of torture, after the agony of a miserable marriage, the unhappy wife procured a judicial separation and the custody of her two children. During these wretched years her eyes opened. She lost her trust in a vague optimism. Like *Candide*, she was disillusioned by the logic of facts.

Her first novel, *Rose et Blanche*, was published as the work of "Jules Sand"; but she used her famous pen-name of "George Sand" on the publication of *Indiana*. From this time she continued to write an immense number of works, which reflect the strange shifts of her life. *Lelia*, and other novels, reveal the tumult and revolt that mark her early years in Paris. *Consuelo*, *Spiridion*, and many another volume show her engaged with political, philosophical, and religious speculation. *Elle et Lui* and *Lucrezia Floriani* are the outcome of her relations with Alfred de Musset and Chopin. The calm of her later years is reflected in *La Petite Fadette*, *Francois le Champi*, and other charming studies of rustic life.

As a novelist, "George Sand" is inferior to Balzac. Her stories are too didactic to be perfect. Novels with a purpose have been effective and, at the same time, artistic. Voltaire, whose swift, live pen was always wielded in the service of liberty, wrote many masterpieces filled with propaganda. His *Candide*, in spite of its obvious purpose, remains the wittiest book in the world. Rousseau, who flamed his social views over the civilized world, influenced men through the medium of prose fiction. In a lesser degree this is true of Bernardin de St. Pierre, Chateaubriand, and even Charles Dickens.

"George Sand," aiming at the same power, almost overloads her stories with masses of reverie. Her language is beautifully rich and pure, and her sentences melodious and full. She never runs her thoughts to death, but leaves the reader at the end of one of her opulent sentences, with plenty of food for future thought. Especially is this noticeable in *Spiridion*, in which she openly attacks the Christian superstition; and in *Consuelo*, which treats of the rights of women.

A great woman, "George Sand," is free from the effusive egoism so common with Continental writers. There was something of the Stoic in her nature, and she soared above the uneasy vanities of her contemporaries. Indifferent to luxury and fame, she did her work bravely. Intellectuals welcome in her a sister, not silenced by the terrors of theology, or limited by the bonds of conventionalism; but capable of pioneer work in life.

A woman of this stamp, like our own "George Eliot," must be judged charitably. With all the inevitable drawbacks of her womanliness, this gifted woman fought the battle for Freedom. It was a warfare not without scars; with rallyings on the stricken field; with its moments of triumph. If her works exhibit this warfare and this perplexity on too many eloquent pages, we judge with the forbearance springing from that larger wisdom which tempers justice with sympathy. Her first claim on us is, indeed, genius; but we should be hardly less interested in the record of a woman born of that heroic temper to which, after life-long recognition of the vanity of vanities, Liberty never waxed old, nor Love failed of its loveliness.

MIMNERMUS.

The Everlasting Hills.

II.

THE destructive snow and ice-slips are, however, mild visitations in comparison with other evils which befall the Alpine folk. Rocks may at any moment come rattling down in bomb-like fashion, or the entire side of a mountain may crash into the valleys, occasioning far-flung ruin. This form of landslide is termed the Bergfall, and all the Alpine countries bear sorrowful witness to its capacity in spreading desolation and woe. In Roman times the ancient city of Velleja was blotted out by the sudden crumbling of the mountain of Rovinazzo, and there is little evidence that any of the population escaped injury and death. Taurentum was overwhelmed in the sixth century, A.D., by falling rocks. The waters of Lake Geneva are still strewn with the mountain fragments then hurled into them. The dwellers throughout the Alpine regions have been the victims of many hundreds of such bergfalls within the historical period. Happy and prosperous villages, and immense tracts of cultivated land have been swept away. Streams have been diverted from their beds, and new lakes have arisen. Once smiling valleys remain as pitiful spectacles of utter desolation. For the second time Rossberg collapsed in 1806, when a wet summer having saturated the underlying clay, the mountain broke away. In the words of Hutchinson:—

The part which fell was about three miles long and 350 yards wide and 33 yards thick. In five minutes one of the most fertile valleys in Switzerland was changed to a stony desert. Three whole villages, six churches, 120 houses, 200 chalets or stables, 225 head of cattle, and much land were buried under the ruins of Rossberg; 484 persons lost their lives.

The sudden collapse of Monte Conto in 1618 proved even more disastrous, when 2,400 people were entombed in the debris. Every effort to save the victims was useless, for all that could be recovered consisted in a few mangled corpses and the bell of the village church. To these happenings may be added the earthquakes which occur more frequently in highland regions than elsewhere.

The apparently frozen pinnacles are not destitute of organic forms. Plants and animals have admirably adapted themselves to their Arctic environment. Much as we see the crocus and the snowdrop timidly peeping above the softening snow during winter's stern reign, so do blooms of most exquisite beauty make themselves a home on the storm-lashed hills. Alpine shrubs and blossoms are diminutive when contrasted with those that thrive in more genial surroundings, but this in no way detracts from their loveliness. Temperature has much to do with the proportions of plants. As we journey northwards in Europe the monarchs of the woodlands dwindle in size until they ultimately shrink to mere shrubs and shrublets. It is stated that the dwarf willow, which extends to the Arctic regions, becomes so tiny that seven perfect trees may be placed on the page of an octavo volume.

Alpine flowers flourish on the fringes of the splendid forests which rise above the fertile valley lands. They grow in multitudinous masses on the sloping pastures, thus adding to the splendour of the landscape. They emblazon the emerald grasses with their glowing colours, while still higher, where the turf no longer grows, the flowers find a refuge in nooks and crannies, and even adorn the edges of the glaciers as they bud and blossom at their appointed season. Probably all these flowering plants would perish were they not protected from the terrible winter frosts by their warm mantle of snow. The more delicate forms are preserved during severe seasons

by lying concealed under the snow throughout the year while patiently awaiting more favourable times. An extraordinary diversity of vegetable life dwells on the mountains, and the Alpine floras present us, at some altitude or other, with miniature representatives of almost every plant-type native to the temperate and northern climes. Among plants selected for special mention are the

tiny orchids quite as interesting in their way as those from the tropics; liliputian trees, and a tree-like moss branching into an erect little pyramid as if in imitation of a mountain pine; ferns that peep cautiously from narrow rocky crevices as if clinging to the rocks for shelter from cold blasts; bulbous plants from lilies to bluebells; evergreen shrubs, perfect in leaf and blossom and fruit, yet so small that one's hat will cover them.

The climate of the lower southern slopes and openings of the Alpine valleys is more propitious than that of the plains of Lombardy. There the evergreen oak flourishes, and the wild olive ripens its fruits. Other spots enjoying a sunward aspect are, unfortunately, exposed to the cold mountain blasts, and although their plant population is extensive, only the most hardy perennials can withstand the severity of the winter. The vine is widely cultivated in higher regions than the olive. The olive thrives on the lowest slopes, while the tougher vine grows vigorously on the higher levels. Vineyards abound among the Alps, and even in their northern regions splendid grapes are ripened at a considerable height where the vines are protected from the nipping and eager winds. The vine has apparently adapted itself to the bitter Alpine winters, and it almost invariably resists a temperature which proves fatal to it in warmer climes.

In the upper regions, where the vine grows indifferently, various cereals are extensively sown. This zone also coincides with the area of trees whose leaves are shed as winter approaches. Our deciduous trees, such as the beech, the ash, and the oak, mingle in the woods and forests; but in the Alps these plants seldom grow in company. Still, the Alpine areas in which deciduous trees thin out and disappear represent fairly accurately the beginning of the arctic girdle of the hills. This frigid region varies in altitude, but its average may be reckoned at about 4,000 feet above sea level on its northern side, while it rises to 5,500 feet on the southern slopes, for these are favoured with warmer air currents and an ampler supply of sunshine. In the Austrian Alps beech forests flourish, but in other Alpine districts the woodlands are merely a shadow of their former glory. Much of their timber has been utilized for building, and numerous forests have been uprooted to prepare the soil for pasture and mown crops. In some places the scenery is almost Scottish, for the pine and Scotch fir now stand on sites once occupied by the oak and beech. The mountain goats ravage the saplings of the beech and oak, but the pines and firs prove less vulnerable to the attacks of these animals. The dwarf pine figures prominently on heights to which other trees do not climb. The peasantry are alive to the fact that the mountain forests not only exercise a beneficent influence on rainfall and climate, but also serve as a barrier against the baleful powers of the vernal avalanche. The destruction of trees is viewed with aversion; the felling of timber in certain forests is sternly forbidden; while, where it is permitted, timber cutting is very carefully supervised by the authorities.

In the upper Alpine retreats peculiar plants live, and some of these thrive even above the permanent snowline. Yet the rhododendron, willow, and other familiar friends display their dwarfed forms in this frigid habitat. Chalets are met with in Piedmont at a height of 8,500 feet, and plants are quite numerous 1,000 feet higher.

Below these great altitudes many strange and beautiful growths bloom in sheltered spots, and derive their moisture from the streamlets leaping from the melted snow. Giant anemones, sky-blue gentians, asters, daisies, primulas, forget-me-nots, saxifrages, poppies, solandellas, the edelweiss, and countless other floral gems flourish in such sweet profusion that a glorious flower garden gladdens the eye and refreshes the mind. Even on the very heights themselves, where glacial conditions prevail, in retreats free from snow and ice, where a modicum of soil and moisture is at hand, various species of flowering plants bloom at an altitude of 11,000 feet. Most of these vegetable organisms are arctic in character, and date from the Great Ice Age. From foothill to mountain-top, in one zone or another, most modes of floral life are encountered. There we meet the "Tree for the builder's yard—flowers for the bride's chamber—corn for the granary—moss for the grave."

The rocky retreats of the Alps provide a refuge for several large mammals now rare elsewhere in Western Europe. The urus, which roamed through the forests of prehistoric times, has long since passed away in company with the marsh-hog and many other animals. The wild boar lingers, and the black and brown bears tremble on the brink of extinction in the Tyrol, and perhaps in the Jura mountains. The black bear plunders the crops, while the brown variety is a serious enemy to the sheep and goats. The wolf survives in several secluded Alpine areas, but his doom is certain. This fierce and intelligent beast devours any kind of flesh available, but the domesticated animals form its favourite prey. Only in the depth of winter, when driven by hunger, will the Alpine wolf venture near the habitations of man. The crafty fox is common, but he carefully shuns observation. The sheep-stealing lynx is now rare, but the wild cat continues to lead a precarious existence in the more remote regions. The streams and lakes have their otter residents, while the weasel, stoat, and polecat wage war upon the poultry. The beaver is probably extinct, but the squirrels are abundant. Mountain hares are few, but rabbits are very numerous. The active chamois ranges throughout the Alps, but its numbers sadly decline. The steinbok, recently so common, is now confined to certain spots, where it is preserved. The roe, the fallow, and red deer, once so familiar in the Swiss and French Alps, are now rarely seen there, although they are still found in the Austrian and Bavarian highlands. The bearded vulture—the lammergeier, a rapacious bird of prey, originally widely distributed—now only persists in the least frequented mountains. Normally a carrion feeder, this fierce bird appears to prefer living prey, and will attack wild or domesticated animals with equal impartiality. The golden eagle, ten or a dozen species of owls, and other carnivorous birds abound, while game birds are plentiful, and the smaller songsters are well in evidence. Most of the tarns and lakes contain fine fresh-water fish, the trout and pike being remarkably large. Reptile life is poorly represented, but the common frog is extraordinarily abundant in the Rhone valley. Snakes, including a couple of adders, are not unknown. Among insects, moths and butterflies are richly represented, and various magnificent species rare in Britain are ubiquitous in the Alps. An Alpine tour has therefore been recommended to the collector as affording the fullest opportunity presented in temperate regions for the exercise of his art.

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

Give me liberty to know, to think, to believe, and to utter freely, according to conscience, above all other liberties.—Milton.

Priests and Politics.

THERE is an opinion abroad that the political power of the priest is, if not dead, moribund, and it is well that Freethinkers should have their attention drawn to the significant appearance of the priest in various quasi-political guises, the more especially as these are such as to mislead effectively the ordinary citizens who, having left school with a bias that what priests do is honourable and that what newspapers print is above suspicion and therefore requires no analysing, is neither inclined nor, if inclined, energetic enough to draw original conclusions. Such a one cannot admit the failure of Christianity because he has not been taught so; cannot admit the loss of liberty because he does not see the chains; cannot believe that religion is still intolerant because the fires of Smithfield are not burning. It is this "healthy stupidity" which makes the work of the pioneer so difficult as almost to exhaust his patience.

Bismarck saw the uses to which religion might be put when he encouraged the Roman Catholic Church in Germany that he might—as an inelegant phrase has it—"dish the Socialists." Although he did not succeed completely in his project, yet this move rendered their propaganda more difficult of accomplishment and at the same time fostered a recognition of the need for respectability, by which all revolutionary tendency was effectively damned. A cloak for hypocrisy, an ogre for fainthearts, a refuge for the weak and an excuse for folly, respectability is a brake which politicians and parsons apply to the wheels of an energetic progressive movement.

As one can examine dispassionately a cause operating in a foreign country, whilst the same examination conducted with regard to this country would have to surmount not only the ordinary difficulties inherent in the problem but the greater difficulties interposed by prejudice, it might be as well to call to remembrance the political power of the priest in Russia and the reactionary tendencies of the Orthodox Church. We are reminded of the evil effects of priestly control by a criticism of *The Fall of the Romanoffs*, in which it is stated that Russian aristocratic circles held the view that the security of that country lay in the *invulnerability of Czarism with its powerful religious sanction*. When we remember that Czarism stands for political repression, serfdom, vodka, ignorance, and Siberia, we recognize what a meet husband Religion has clasped to her bosom. It is rather curious that in the same paper in which the criticism of *The Fall of the Romanoffs* appeared should be published the summary of a speech by Professor Russell, before the Medical Guild, in which he said that he had too great an admiration for, and appreciation of, what Christianity and Christian Ethics had done for the English-speaking people to yield to the proposal that voluntary hospitals should be abolished. Why Christianity should be for the benefit of English-speaking peoples and in the same age should support such a soul-destroying institution as Czarism is not very apparent.

Priests, however, even in English-speaking countries, are taking steps to ensure that their political power will be wielded, whether for the general welfare or not, is a matter upon which there is little doubt. It probably was overlooked by many Freethinkers that there were a number of priests at the Sinn Fein Conference held in Dublin, and that at least three spoke. The most amazing suggestion came from a priest. It was that the Conference should constitute itself a constituent assembly! The president sat severely upon him by pointing out that the Conference had no power to do that, as that power rested with the Irish people.

We cannot see that priests have any reason for attending a Sinn Fein Conference, unless it be that, fearful that the Irish people will fall away from the Church as the result of an enlightened educational policy which must follow so soon as Irish political aspirations for political autonomy are fulfilled, and that people concentrate on removing from its life such evils as at present sicken it, they must needs do anything which will discredit any movement which might result in domestic peace. Had the Conference accepted the suggestion, the feeling of the Sinn Feiners can better be imagined than described. It would have been the French Convention over again, and the resulting political turmoil would keep men's minds off the question of religious domination.

That religion should have become national, instead of remaining international, as it was intended to be by the early Church, is a problem which has suggested itself to many. We know how actively ministers of religion, both in allied and enemy countries, supported the idea of war, and how, in those countries where voluntary enlistment obtained, they were active workers in recruiting campaigns. From this it is obvious that the opinions of those in charge of a Church are such as obtain general acquiescence in the nation to which they belong and in which they usually work. In political matters such steps have to be taken as will obtain the greatest benefit to the form of religion which chances to be supreme, and each step tends to render that Church more susceptible to national opinion. It is, therefore, necessary that that opinion should not be inimical, with which purpose in view we find priests of all denominations on the School Boards, fighting tooth and nail for the retention of the Bible in schools, and, where they find an indifferent electorate, attempting to bind posterity to perpetuating Biblical teaching by putting denominational schools under public control. It is, perhaps, insidious quasi-political action such as this which requires watching. The general public does not look ahead: to it the future means nothing. No greater duty devolves upon Freethinkers than that of educating the public to inquire closely into all the suggestions of priests, as these, even though apparently of temporary effect, may have such an aftermath as to make shudder all who look upon freedom as the birthright of man.

JOHN McMILLAN.

The Book of the Words of Americus the Prophet. 1917.

1. The words of Americus the son of Americ which he spake in the ears of the people;
2. List unto me ye children of the earth, give ear while I show you the folly of your ways and doings.
3. For behold the cunning men have got you in their toils, and the men of Belial, yea, the sons of the strange women triumph over you.
4. And ye say wherein have the cunning men obtained the mastery over us, and in what manner do the men of Belial triumph over us?
5. Verily I say unto you, that inasmuch as ye are satisfied with your state of life; insomuch are ye stumbling blocks to your own progress, evolution, and happiness.
6. For if ye would inherit the Kingdom of Heaven, ye must make it for yourselves.
7. And, moreover, if ye desire a double portion thereof (as do the priests) ye must make it for yourselves, on earth.
8. But some men will say, What know ye of the Kingdom of Heaven; and who hath enlightened thee as to life after death?
9. Harken unto me ye children of men, Listen to the words of Americus the son of Americ.

10. I know not, and no man knoweth, the secret of the grave. No soul returneth from the other side of the river of death.

11. For death hath been, for ever, the greatest marvel of life; the King of Terrors; the Stock in Trade of all who profit by the ignorance of their fellow-men.

12. For behold the ignorance that pertaineth to death goeth back to the beginning of life upon the earth. Yea, and man knoweth no more thereof than the beasts of the field.

13. Science toucheth it not, and study taketh not away the veil which hideth it. Priests and prophets are alike unacquainted with it.

14. Wherefore, O man, take thy soul unto thine own keeping. Search for wisdom and learn the ways of life, but leave thy death and destiny in the hands of the Allwise.

15. For he speaketh not into the ears of men. His silence is as the silence of the Stars. No man hath seen him at any time, and none has heard his speech.

16. No archbishop, nor archdeacon, hath heard his voice, No Pope nor Nonconformist hath seen his face.

17. Neither did Moses the lawgiver, as he hath himself declared.

18. Then how cometh it that men claim a knowledge of his thoughts and desires, his jealousy, his vengeance, his dark designs for punishment of evildoers?

19. Are not the men who profit by this doctrine more sinful than the sinners?

20. Doth not the little chapel minister receive £5 per week for explaining the mysteries?

21. Lo! he is clothed in comfort, and fareth sumptuously. He hath a bath-room and a library, a study, and a withdrawing-room.

22. He urgeth the working-man to be content, and unto him that hath but little he saith: Ye shall receive the balance due when ye shall be dead.

23. This hath been the teaching of the priests for many generations; yea, for many centuries; and the people murmur not.

24. They walk in darkness and do reverence to the priesthood, yea, they are astonished at their knowledge and respectability.

25. They call upon them when they marry, and when they die. They pay them fees, and bring their little ones to be admitted to the Church.

26. With their guidance the world has gone astray. We have heard the sound of the trumpet, the alarm of war, the terror that flyeth by night.

Acid Drops.

The German advance into Italy gives God another chance to work a miracle, and incidentally an opportunity for Mr. Bottomley to advertise it. The Campaniles, those slender towers which are so conspicuous a feature of Italian landscapes, are in danger—some in process of destruction. Serving as they may for observation posts and target directors, both sides, Italian and German, are compelled to remove them. There is, therefore, going on what military correspondents have well called a "massacre of Campaniles." Hence the opportunity for a miracle. And it would be quite easy for "Providence" to either divert the shell or upset calculations—that is, if Providence really cared about the matter.

A decree *nisi* was granted in the Divorce Court to a driver in the R.F.A., owing to the misconduct of his wife with a W. W. A. Phillips, superintendent of a Sunday-school. No moral this time.

The Bishop of London complains that young men leaving public schools seem "to have no enthusiasm about the Church." Why should they? If the Bishop of London could only see it, he might find the explanation close at hand. How could any decently educated and intelligent young man feel any enthusiasm about a set of doctrines that are not worth the paper they are printed on, or a set of religious

leaders that are monuments of opportunism and intellectually inefficient?

When journalists drop into theology, they usually distinguish themselves. Referring to the victory at Gaza, the *Star* opened a leading article with the words: "Since the first of war correspondents wrote the Book of Joshua." As God is popularly supposed to be the author of the Bible, it follows that our contemporary regards the Deity as a journalist. Which, as old Euclid says, is absurd.

The *Daily Express* printed a bold headline, "Archbishop as Labour Leader." It referred to a soft-soapy speech made by the Archbishop of York in the House of Lords on the question of labour unrest. Why is the Church displaying so much zeal in wooing the working man? "Aye, there's the rub."

Cosmo Gordon Lang, who is posing as the friend of labour, lives in a palace, and has a modest income of £10,000 yearly. He should be an authority on the blessings of poverty.

The War does not appear to benefit Christianity. "Religion," says the *Star*, "was never at so low an ebb, so openly repudiated, or, what is worse, so travestied by charlatans and blackguards." The latter remark seems to be a sly dig at some journalistic Christians.

The holding of the Lord Mayor's show and banquet this year has been described as an "expensive and possibly dangerous farce." Among those present at the banquet were the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of London.

The Bishop of Norwich writes in the *Sunday Times* on the question of education. In the course of a couple of columns he succeeds in saying very little about education, but does succeed in showing his professional interest in the subject. His great concern is for religious instruction, and not that alone, but for religious teachers.

We are not drawing a sharp line between the religious training to be given in the Church schools and the Council schools. It is our wish that the religious instruction in both kinds of schools should be efficient, and this will not be the case unless the religious education is in the hands of those who believe and care, and all the teachers of religion have had satisfactory preparation.

If that means anything, it means that none but teachers who believe in religion are to be employed in our schools. There will be religious tests, and the non-religious will be eliminated. We quite agree that there is a certain amount of reason in the Bishop's contention—if religion is retained in the schools. But we hope that one result of reconstruction after the War will be to leave religion to the clergy and to the parents, who alone should be responsible for its inculcation.

Already the Food Controller has knocked the stuffing out of the Christmas pudding, and if our lords and governors get their way, the Merry Birthday of the Man of Sorrows will be a fast rather than a feast. This will affect adversely the ancient association between godliness and gluttony.

An advertisement in an Essex paper states that the Vicar of South Benfleet is prepared to offer £28 yearly for the services of a church organist. Does he want a Christian martyr as well as a musician?

Miss Rebecca West, writing in the *Daily News*, says we "must cease to think of Charles the Second as 'the merry monarch,'" and learn to think of him as "our only king with sufficiently mental movement to indulge in religious speculation." If this modern Solomon is the most intellectual of British monarchs, it does not say much for the others.

In an illuminating article on the Sinn Fein Movement by Mr. Arnold Bennett, the following significant sentence occurs: "There are priests who remain in the movement chiefly in order to keep the movement in order." This remark is true of other political organizations.

It is curious that Christians should be so reluctant to admit Thomas Paine's undoubted gifts as a writer. For a century he has been abused, and yet his written words still have vitality. Recently the *Daily News*, in an impressive editorial on the Russian crisis, quoted Paine's vigorous phrase concerning an earlier revolution as the times that "try men's souls."

The British Government has recognized Zionism, and this has provoked a very witty remark from the *Jewish Chronicle* that the Jewish people will become "a nation, and not a hyphenation."

Mr. S. P. Willis, a member of the well-known Bristol family, has published a pamphlet on *Teetotalism, Arrested, Examined, and Exposed*. In dealing with Paul's advice to Timothy, he says:—

We need not dwell long on the advice of Paul to Timothy to "take a little Wine for thy stomach's sake" and his often infirmities. How was it Paul recommended Wine? He was not a doctor! He was giving advice to one too abstemious, and he desired him to take a little stimulant. What would have been the benefit of liquor of grapes or grape juice? Why, he might as well have advised him to take jams, jellies, lollypops, and treacle. No mother would give these to a sick child with a weak stomach. Paul's advice shows there must have been Wine which did good to a weak stomach, and to take it was no sin in his judgment.

We do not know whether Mr. Willis has read Mr. G. W. Foote's *Bible and Beer*, but we are sending him a copy. And we take this occasion of commending that pamphlet to all our readers who are desirous of seeing how far Christianity supports teetotalism. The published price is one penny, and some good propagandist work might be done with it just now.

The latest appeal for cash of the Salvation Army is on behalf of "the refugees of North Italy." We had the idea that the Italians mostly belong to an older and more respectable religious organization.

Sabbatarians are busy taking advantage of the national preoccupation with the War. At Wareham, Dorset, five Army officers have been fined for shooting game on a Sunday. When will these Christians realize that they are living in the British Empire, and not in Ancient Judæa?

American papers state that Harry Lauder is speaking and singing on behalf of the Young Men's Christian Association. Billy Sunday and other Transatlantic revivalists will be pleased.

Bishop Welldon sneered recently at Spiritualist mediums receiving money for their services. This provoked an answer from the Rev. G. V. Owen, of Warrington, who said the "Christian ministry go to the length of foretelling the future, of groups as of individuals, of wicked as of good. I have heard Bishop Welldon do this most eloquently, in public and unashamed, and I believe that, in payment for such good service, to use an old phrase, his hand is crossed with silver."

The dear Bishop of London says that "there was no more religious body of men in the country than our public school masters." Exactly! But so many of these gentlemen are clergymen.

There are moments, says the *Daily News*, commenting on the Bishop of London's utterances on the divorce question, "when he appears to rival the prophet Habakkuk and to be capable of anything. It is a great pity in all seriousness that such grotesque utterances should be allowed to proceed

as the considered opinions of a distinguished ecclesiastical dignitary. Rank blasphemy would be a less grave occasion to the enemy than such humourless and almost indecent lack of sense." Very strong for the pious *Daily News*, but not undeserved.

The Sunday papers are not entirely given to religion. The *Sunday Pictorial* says: "The Bible tells us how Samson carried the gates of Gaza. Now General Allenby has gone one better and carried the whole city."

Some of the newspapers have been getting highly indignant with Dr. Lyttleton, late Headmaster of Eton, for having said that newspapers were primarily commercial undertakings, and were mainly concerned with those things that make for increased circulation. But everyone knows this to be the cold truth. Why are certain classes of opinion boycotted in the press, if not because they would offend readers and so lead to a diminished circulation? It is not because editors always disagree with these opinions, often they are identical with their own. But they are dealing with a public that values independence of opinion less than anything else, and the aim of the successful newspaper editor becomes largely that of giving the readers what they want. They become a sounding-board for prejudice instead of a platform for the free expression of opinion. And it is surely the last word in smug hypocrisy to pretend that most newspapers are not commercial undertakings.

"Should the Parson Pay?" was the neat paraphrastic heading to a report of the Rev. A. J. Waldron's dispute with a money-lender over payment of a promissory note for £100. In the end the Court decided that this parson should, with costs.

Sir Harry Johnson finds, in the course of a short article in *Reynolds*, a rather curious reason for recommending missionary activity amongst savages—non-European it should be said. Sir Harry admits that he "is not a believer in the phantasmagora" of the Churches, but he says: "A variety of religions tend to hamper human intercourse, and is among the reasons why the black races are uneducated." He thinks, therefore, that the missionaries by breaking down native religions make for civilization. There seems quite a nest of fallacies here. (1) We do not agree that the Africans are uneducated because they are religious. Primarily they are religious because they are uneducated. (2) Missionaries do not civilize in virtue of their religion; whatever civilizing influences follow are due to the secular and scientific developments that accompany them. And is there any need, save a commercial one, for the missionaries being there at all?

Intercession.

Oh, God in Heaven! cease thou to be dumb;
We crowd into thy Church this day with pride,
To pray that thou wilt beat our Army drum,
And beating, take thy stand upon our side.
Oh, put thine arm into the War with zest
(Our soldiers fight on Sundays at their best).

Stand thou aloof from all our enemies;
Help with the guns our foes to overthrow;
Slumber no more in peaceful Paradise;
Send all thy winds the wicked Zepps to blow;
Smash with thy power this military pest
(Our soldiers fight on Sundays at their best).

So, when the War at last is surely won,
And we once more assemble in thy Church,
We shall give thanks for all that thou hast done;
Oh, God! thou wilt not leave us in the lurch,
The Allies make thee here and now their guest
(Our soldiers fight on Sundays at their best).

ARTHUR F. THORN.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

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

To Correspondents.

G. J. GRASSIE.—After reading your letter, we are gratified at your thinking our leaflet on "The Massacre of the Innocents" "blasphemous, scornful, and derisive."

A. SPENCER.—Thanks. Came in quite useful.

W. H. QUINLIVAN.—Pleased to hear from a new reader, and still more pleased to know that you have been the means of introducing the paper to others. That is as it should be. The *Freethinker* is too good to keep to one's self.

W. R.—Received. Thanks.

TWO BROTHERS.—We very much appreciate your help in securing new readers. Pleased also to have your good opinion of our work.

E. A. McDONALD (Johannesburg).—Your second donation to Fund safely received. The first was acknowledged in our issue for September 16. You will be pleased to learn that the outlook for Freethought is very cheering, and although the struggle is a hard one, it brings its own compensations. And there is much pleasure in a good fight in a good cause, and with the right kind of weapons.

H. McLEOD.—The lecture was under the auspices of an Association of Continental Freethinkers in London.

(MRS.) A. ANDREWS.—We are pleased, but not surprised, to find that you so much enjoyed Mr. Lloyd's Glasgow lectures. Not to have done so would have been uncomplimentary to yourself. It is good to know that the *Freethinker* serves as a weekly stimulant.

PHOENIX.—It is good to find so many new readers—yourself among them—keenly interested in the paper, and bent on securing new readers.

G. MOORE.—You do not say in what way you think we can help you. We shall be pleased to do anything that lies within our power.

J. BREESE.—Paper sent as directed. Thanks.

MRS. TURNBULL (Glasgow).—Your many years' devotion to Freethought makes one proud of the Cause which can enlist such unselfish devotion. We hope to see you in the near future.

W. S. WHITE.—Naturally your soldier son was able to give you the reason—which, as you say, is a prosaic one—for the present position of the Virgin of Albert. But we are still waiting for Mr. Bottomley to own up. Shall be very pleased to see the portrait.

G. WEBB.—Of course, the belief that the human race is the aim and object of the universe is, scientifically, rubbish; but we have to deal with things as other people take them. We note your subscription is sent as "a thankoffering to Almighty God for having successfully piloted the *Freethinker* through these troublous times."

F. MARSON.—To send 4s. 4d. to the Sustentation Fund, being one penny per week for the year during which you have bought the *Freethinker*, is a quite nice form of "conscience money."

E. B.—Thanks for cuttings.

W. J. ROBINS.—Considerations of space and the nature of the subject—which is a little outside our scope—prevents our publishing your interesting communication.

F. W. LLOYD.—Yes, we have thought of reprinting. It is the paper trouble that is in the way. But we may surmount that in the New Year, if not before.

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.

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

"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.

Final List of Subscriptions.

Previously acknowledged, £344 14s. 11d. J. C. of M., £1 1s. T. A. Mathews, 10s. James Burrell, 2s. 4d. G. F. Dixon, £5. F. (Aberdeen), 5s. R. L. M., £2. J. Breese (2nd sub.), £1. Mr. and Mrs. S. White, 10s. M. Margerson, 10s. J. Stott, 1s. 3d. C. Bridger, 1s. 3d. G. Webb, 10s. 6d. J. H. Gartrell, 10s. H. H. Wignall, 7s. John Clark, 2s. 6d. Mrs. Turnbull, 10s. E. A. McDonald (S.A.), £1. Two Brothers (Belfast), 5s. H. D. and J. B., 2s. S. Lidgett, 2s. 6d. R. Lloyd, 3s. H. McLeod, 5s. Two Maidstoners, 3s. 6d. Mrs. A. Andrews, 5s. Phoenix, 2s. 6d. Binomial, 10s. J. Hammond, £1. E. Oliver, £2 2s. G. T. Bowman, 2s. J. Adams, 6s. 8d. F. Cox, 6s. 8d. D. Williams, 6s. 8d. E. Lloyd, 2s. 6d. J. Evans, 2s. 6d. H. W. U., 5s. E. Kirkman, 5s. A. J. Williams, 5s. W. Hill (Atheist), 2s. 6d. F. W. Lloyd, 10s. F. Marson, 4s. 4d. C. and K. Holmes, 3s. J. Sanders, 2s. J. H. Langford, 10s. J. Bryan, 2s. 6d. A. Thetford, 2s. 6d. A. Astey, 2s. 6d. J. Carr, 5s. J. Kelsey, 2s. 6d. Mr. and Mrs. J. Shaw, 10s. J. B. Baillie, 10s. Mr. and Mrs. J. Watkins, 2s. 6d. Mrs. Amy Cross, 5s. J. Glassbrook, 5s. J. N. Hill, 5s. Debtor, 5s. Total, £366 5s. 7d.

This Fund is now closed.

Sugar Plums.

We close the Sustentation Fund in this issue with a total of £366 5s. 7d. The deficit of last year is quite wiped out, and a balance left to meet the recurring weekly loss. The response has been generous, and we beg to thank most heartily all who have contributed to the result. We have had ample evidence in the letters received of the affectionate esteem in which the *Freethinker* is held, and it is gratifying to note the number of new readers who have expressed their warm admiration of this journal. From the older readers we have been much encouraged by the many expressions of appreciation of all we have done, and of confidence in our judgment in the conduct of affairs. Some few of these letters we have given to our readers in these columns, but we value them all as a source of inspiration for the—we are afraid—very troublous times ahead. And so we press on with the courage born of a good cause, and a confidence desired from the whole-hearted support of our readers.

We cannot resist the temptation to publish the following letter which we hope we deserve—at least we have tried to deserve it:—

Dear Mr. Cohen,—Mails just received, and I note from the *Freethinker* that the annual Sustentation Fund is on the carpet again. I therefore lose no time in sending you the enclosed draft for £5, as my contribution to the worthy cause. The £250 loss incurred during the past year is only really a flea-bite, which I feel sure your readers will easily and quickly make good.

I do not think there is much chance of the *Freethinker* either "departing this life" or deteriorating in tone as long as you are in charge of it, and I hope that the time is not far distant when a man of your abilities will get a better respectable living wage out of the job than you at present appear to be getting.

Since our late Editor died, you have done wonders—no one could have done more—and I only hope that you are looking after your health, to enable you to keep on with the good work for many, many more years yet.

You are a business man as well as editor.

Hoping you are in the best of health and with kindest regards, I remain, yours sincerely,
G. F. DIXON.

To-day (Nov. 25) Mr. Cohen lectures twice in The Palace, Nuneaton. The afternoon meeting is at 2.45, evening at 6.30. Mr. Cohen is breaking new ground here, and it is hoped that all Freethinkers in the neighbourhood will make

the occasion a special one. The meetings are being well advertised, and the intention is to start a Branch of the N. S. S. There should be no difficulty in doing this, or in starting a dozen new Branches in other places within the next few months.

There was a fine audience at Birmingham on Sunday last to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "Do the Dead Live?" The address was followed with the closest attention, and frequent outbursts of applause. It is intended to continue the lectures, and we sincerely hope the Committee will receive the support of all local Freethinkers. The Repertory Theatre is centrally situated; it is a new and tastefully decorated building, and provided the proper amount of local help is given, the Movement in Birmingham should profit considerably by having its lectures in this place.

We were pleased to receive a letter the other day from Mr. R. H. Rosetti, who writes that he is fit and well, despite the unasked for and unwelcome attentions of "Fritz." :—

The clerk of the weather still appears to have plenty of water on hand, and lavishes a good portion of it this side of the channel. God has apparently been with us on the Western Front, for we are slowly pushing ahead; but to appear strictly impartial, he has done a bit for Fritz on the Italian Front: so it gives both sides an opportunity of offering thanks.

I notice dear old, but hypercritical England is to have the farce of a National Day of Prayer. With two or three hundreds of thousands of its young men killed, with countless war hospitals full of wounded, with the civil population struggling for the bare necessities of life, and being killed, injured, and harassed by bombs from enemy aircraft, God is to be asked for his guidance during the assumed last phase of the War, apparently along the same lines as the preceding phases.

With the newly inspired Mr. Bottomley insisting on a Christmas peace, whilst the Church, whose inspiration is encrusted with age, intends on the first Sunday in the New Year to ask for God's guidance during the last phase of the War, one has a striking example of the value of inspiration, whether amateur or professional, when weighed in the scales of common sense.

Will you please remember me very kindly to all at home. I hope they are in the very best of health and spirits, despite the attentions of Fritz. Needless to say, I wish the same to yourself.

Freethinking friends residing in the neighbourhood of Goldthorpe, Bolton, or Thurnscoe, are cordially invited by the Committee of the new Goldthorpe Branch to attend the Branch meeting to-day, November 25. Further particulars can be obtained on application to the Secretary, Mr. Harold Austin, 2, Nora Street, Goldthorpe. For the time of meeting, etc., see Lecture Notice.

We are glad to hear that Mr. Lloyd had good meetings at Manchester last Sunday. The Secretary writes that the audiences were good and enthusiastic. There were plenty of questions and discussion, with a good sale of literature, and many applications for membership forms. The new Branch is working well, and bids fair to have one of the largest memberships in the country. Anyway, the Committee mean to get it if it is at all possible.

The *Daily Chronicle*, after holding out as long as it was able against an increase of price, has been compelled, despite a decrease in the number of pages, to advance from a halfpenny to a penny. Its reason is, it says, paper at 500 per cent. above pre-war prices, and a generally increased cost of production. We can appreciate the reason, and we count every month that we can keep the *Freethinker* unchanged in size and price as so much gain.

Mr. Cohen is booked for South Shields, and for the convenience of friends at a distance who may find it difficult travelling these nights, an afternoon meeting is being arranged. The meetings will be at 3 o'clock and 6.30. Will any friends interested in these meetings, and who feel themselves able to give assistance of any kind, please communicate with the Secretary of the Local Branch, Mr. R. Chapman, 6 Wenlock Road, Simonside, South Shields? Mr. Chapman will welcome suggestions as well as actual help.

The Bible and Immortality.

THE APOCRYPHA.

WE come next to the interval between the Old and New Testaments, in which we find a number of writings that are collectively called "the Apocrypha."

These apocryphal writings are the following: the books of Baruch and Judith, both relating to the time of Nebuchadnezzar; the history of Susanna, the Song of the Three holy children, and Bel and the Dragon, which are later additions to the book of Daniel; the Prayer of Manasses, which is referred to in 2 Chron. xxxiii.; the book of Tobit, a fictitious story of the exile in Babylon; an addition to the book of Esther; 1 Esdras, a later addition to the books of 2 Chronicles and Ezra; 2 Esdras, a pseudo-apocalypse; 1 Maccabees, which contains a history of the Jewish people under the tyrant Antiochus Epiphanes and for a generation later; 2 Maccabees, a work giving a more detailed account of the persecutions of the last-named Syrian monarch; the Wisdom of Solomon, a dissertation in praise of the works of God and the acquirement of wisdom; the book of Ecclesiasticus, containing no less than fifty-one chapters, of a similar character to the books of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes.

Of these writings, we find evidence of the belief in "eternal life" in three; namely, the Wisdom of Solomon, 2 Maccabees, and 2 Esdras. In none of the others is any such belief expressed or implied. In Ecclesiasticus, however, there are many passages which show that the writer did not share that belief. The following are examples:—

Eccl. xvii. 27-30.—Who shall give praise to the Most High in *Hades*?.....Thanksgiving perisheth from the dead, as from one that is not: he that is in life and health shall praise the Lord.....For all things cannot be in man, because the son of man is *not* immortal.

Eccl. xxxviii. 23.—When the dead is at rest, let his remembrance rest; and be comforted for him, when his spirit departeth from him.

Eccl. xli. 3.—Fear not the sentence of death; remember them that have been before thee, and that come after; this is the sentence from the Lord *upon all flesh*.

The apocryphal books were nearly all written in Greek; we therefore find *Hades* employed instead of *Sheol*. We will now look at some of the passages in the three books mentioned which refer to a future life, commencing with the "Wisdom of Solomon." Speaking to "the ungodly," the writer of "Wisdom" says:—

Wisd. i. 12-16.—Court not death in the error of your life; neither draw upon yourselves destruction by your works: because God *made not death*, neither delighteth he when *the living perish*: for he created all things that they might have being.....for righteousness is immortal. But ungodly men by their works and words *called death unto them*.....and they made a covenant with him (or it).

The ideas expressed in this passage were evidently those only of the writer himself, not of the people of his time. Of the latter, whom he calls "the ungodly," he says:—

Wisd. ii. 1, 2.—For they say among themselves, reasoning not aright, Short and sorrowful is our life; and there is no healing when a man cometh to his end, and none was ever known that returned out of *Hades*. Because by mere chance were we born, and hereafter we shall be as though we had never existed.

These ungodly men, it will be perceived, showed far more sense than the godly writer, who appears to have been a religious crank standing almost alone amongst a rational people. His ideas of immortality will be seen in the following passages:—

Wisd. iii. 1-8.—The souls of the righteous are in the hands of God, and no torment shall touch them. In the

eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died.....But they are in peace.....their hope is full of immortality. They shall judge nations, and have dominion over peoples, and the Lord shall reign over them for evermore.

Wisd. iv. 7-11.—But a righteous man, though he die before his time, shall be at rest.....Being found well-pleasing unto God he was beloved of him, and while living among sinners he was translated: he was caught away lest wickedness should change his understanding, or guile deceive his soul.

Thus, according to the first passage, every godly man who obtained "eternal life" was to be a ruler of nations—that were then, or would be in the future, sleeping in Hades or Sheol. What a truly grand idea! It reminds us of the twelve apostles that were to sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. But how would it be if there were more godly men than nations or tribes? According to the second passage, the spirit of the righteous man did not, apparently, enter Sheol at all, but was prematurely "caught away" into heaven, lest he became ungodly if allowed to live long upon the earth.

Coming next to the book of 2 Maccabees, we find in chapter vii. an account of seven brothers who, with their mother, were all barbarously tortured and slain, one after the other, by order of Antiochus Epiphanes, because they refused "to taste swine's flesh" which had been offered in sacrifice—such being forbidden by the Jewish law. In this frightful drama all seven sons, as they were undergoing torture and mutilation, censured the king, who was present, and gave utterance to their hopes of a future life. The following are the last words of three of these martyrs:—

2 Macc. vii. 9 (second son): Thou, miscreant, dost release us out of this present life; but the King of heaven shall raise up us, who have died for his laws, unto an eternal renewal of life.

2 Macc. vii. 14 (fourth son): It is good to die at the hands of men and look for the hopes which are given by God, that we shall be raised up again by him; but as for thee, thou shalt have no resurrection unto life.

2 Macc. vii. 36 (seventh son): For these my brethren, having endured a short pain that bringeth everlasting life, have now died under God's covenant; but thou, through the judgment of God, shalt receive in just measure the penalties of thine arrogance.

These three young men would seem not to have known that no such promise of "eternal life" had ever been given by the "King of heaven." They might, however, have heard of the immortality taught by the writer of "Wisdom," or they might have imagined that as martyrs they deserved it.

We come, lastly, to the unhistorical book of 2 Esdras. In this work of fiction the writer, who calls himself Esdras, discusses matters relating to the future life of man with "the Most High," who replies to him by the mouth of an angel named Uriel. Foremost among the information which he thus received is the following statement respecting the last judgment:—

2 Esd. vii. 32-38.—And the earth shall restore those that are asleep in her, and the secret places shall deliver those souls that were in them. And the Most High shall be revealed upon the seat of judgment.....And the pit of torment shall appear, and over against it shall be the place of rest: and the furnace of Gehenna shall be shewed, and over against it the paradise of delight. And then shall the Most High say to the nations who are raised from the dead.....Look on this side and on that: here is delight and rest, and there fire and torments.

After hearing the foregoing conditions of the proposed "eternal life," Esdras pleads for more mercy to be shown to men, but without success. He then says he

sees that "the world to come shall bring delight to few, but torments unto many"—a reflection which suggests the Gospel words "Many are called, but few chosen." The reason assigned by the Most High for the age-long torments about to be inflicted upon the ungodly of the human race are thus stated by the angel:—

2 Esd. vii. 72.—They that dwell upon the earth shall be tormented for this reason, that having understanding they have wrought iniquity, and receiving commandments have not kept them, and having obtained a law they dealt unfaithfully with that which they received.

The reference here is to the commands supposed to be given to the Jews by Moses in the Pentateuch—which were unknown to nearly all the other nations that were to be tormented for not keeping them.

We will now look at the three forms of belief respecting "eternal life" held by a small minority among the Jews in the period which preceded Christianity. The first of these is that found in the "Wisdom of Solomon." In this book a future life of peace and bliss was to be given only to "the righteous" of the Hebrew nation; all the remaining people—the so-called "ungodly"—were to lie in Hades for ever. The next form of eternal life is that of 2 Maccabees, in which those who gave up their lives by refusal to act contrary to the laws of Moses were to receive them again, and, presumably, were to live for ever—all the rest of the Hebrew nation, apparently, going to the land from which there was no return. The third form of "eternal life" is that described by Esdras, in which the whole of mankind were called up for judgment, after which a few thousands were to be conducted into a "paradise of delight," and the countless millions remaining were to be cast into a lake of fire. It was this last form of immortality, after it had been adopted by the primitive Christians, which has been handed down to our day.

But, it may be asked, whence did the writer of 2 Esdras get this inhuman doctrine? The answer is that he probably borrowed it from another work of fiction—the "Book of Enoch the Prophet"—which came into circulation among the Jews half a century before his time. This will be noticed in the next paper.

ABRACADABRA.

New Testament Legends for Young Readers.

VII.—THE RICH, THE PROUD, THE POOR, THE LOWLY.

ONWARDS the Pioneer and his band travelled to Jerusalem city, on one side of which was the Mount of Olives, and on another, a hill with a round top like a man's skull. Though it was yet miles away across the stony hills, Jesus spoke to the city:—

"O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you kill the prophets; you stone the pioneers. But how happy would I be to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her brood under her wings; but no! you refuse, you refuse; and your house shall be desolate!"

Crowds followed. He would often halt, and, to the multitude that sat on a hillside, as in an open-air theatre, he would tell his tales, or parables.

"None of you," said he, "not even the lowliest, need be lost. A shepherd who misses a sheep from his flock roams the hills till he discovers it, and he carries it home on his shoulders. A woman lights a candle when she has lost a piece of silver at night, and she searches till she finds it. So the King of Heaven will search for you, and the angels will be joyful when you are found."

The crowd murmured their applause,—except the learned Lecturers and the Pharisees.

"A certain man had two sons," so Jesus went on. "The younger son was wild of spirit, and loved adventure. Having got from his father all the money and jewels the good-natured old man could spare, he left home, and took his journey into a far country. There he lived a gay life, spent his money freely, and at last had not a coin left; and just then, a famine brought woe and want to all the land. The spendthrift was obliged to labour as a pig-keeper, in order to earn a little bread. As he watched his grunting herd one day, out on the moors, he remembered the old home, the old days, the old father, and thought how even the slaves had plenty to eat, while he was perishing with hunger. He rose up, and tramped the weary way homewards. When he was yet a distance off, his father saw him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him. The spendthrift, with breaking voice and tears, said he was not worthy to be called a son, but would work for his bread..... The old man would hear nought of such talk, but he bade the servants take off the spendthrift's rags, and give him shoes, a good robe, and a ring for his right hand; and before long the whole household was merry-making, eating a feast of roast veal, and tuning joyously on pipe and harp. But the elder son, coming from the plough-field, and learning how the good-for-nothing spendthrift was being feasted, was angry and would not come in".....

At this point in the tale, the common people could not help glancing at the Lawyers and the pious Make-believes.

"And the old father went out to beg him to enter; for it was a jolly time when a lost brother returned; the dead had, as it were, come to life again; the spendthrift was lost, and now was found."

The people all hung upon him, listening.

"There was a certain rich man," said Jesus,—

A great silence fell on the crowd. Not many rich folk were among them! They were a poor and lowly multitude. They were the "masses."

"His dress was white linen, and fine purple; and he fared sumptuously every day. And there was a certain beggar, named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate, full of sores; and he very much desired to eat the scraps that fell from the rich man's table. The beggar died, and was carried by the angels to heaven, where he sat at meat on the seat next to Abraham, the patriarch; and he leaned on Abraham's bosom. The rich man also died, and the place he went to was the fire of hell, below; and from hell he looked up, and he saw the heavenly table, and the feast, and Lazarus. He cried to Father Abraham, and besought him to send Lazarus with water, if only to cool his parched tongue. Abraham replied that a wide pit yawned between heaven and hell, and none could cross the gulf. He reminded the rich man that the Poor Man had had a horrible time on earth, and he, the Rich Man, had had a very easy and delightful time; and now affairs had changed to the opposite. The rich man thought a few moments, and then put in a word for his five kinsmen, who were still enjoying a fat living on earth. Could not Lazarus take a message and warn these five gentlemen? To this Abraham answered No; for if they had sense to read the old books for themselves, instead of listening to make-believe Lecturers and Pharisees, they could find in the teachings of Moses and the Prophets that it was their duty to think of their neighbours. The rich man argued that surely they would repent, and change their selfish life if a man from the tomb came and spoke to them. But no; Abraham thought that that hard-hearted sort

of person would not be moved, even though Lazarus rose from the dead."

"True, it is true," murmured the crowd of peasants, slaves, fish-picklers, fruit-pickers, and women whom none called "ladies."

Nearer to Jerusalem; nearer to the cross the Pioneer and Wonder-worker journeyed; and he was still passing through Samaria.

Ten men stood at a hundred paces from the road. A dreadful row of ten they were, ragged, with scant hair, with skins scarred and blotched by disease. They were lepers.

"Master, mercy!" all the ten shouted in chorus.

"All is well," he replied, "and you can now go to the priests to show that your skins are healed; and when the priests have spoken the sacred words, you will be able to go back to home and friends."

Nine of them rushed towards Jerusalem, hot-foot! One turned back, and raised a cry of joy, and he made a most reverent salaam to the Master of the jinn, and gave thanks.

He was a Samaritan.

Ten had been cleansed. Only one had the good heart—and good manners—to utter a word of gratitude.

At every step of the road, Jesus met the jealous lawyers and the Long-prayer Men. They hated to see him surrounded by the common villagers and working-class; yet they could not help listening to his tales and speeches. And here is a tale that stung them deep:—

"Two men," said Jesus, "went up to the Temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, the other a tax-collector, whom Scribes and Pious Ones despised as low-class fellows who squeezed money out of unwilling tax-payers. The Pharisee stood bolt upright, and exclaimed in a voice which the bystanders could hear: 'God, I thank thee that I am not as other men are—grabbers, unjust, adulterers, or such a cad as this tax-man! I fast twice in the week, I pay away to the priests Tenths of everything I possess.' The tax-man stood much farther from the Holy Altar than the Pharisee, for he was a modest and simple man; nor would he even lift his eyes skywards. He bent his head, and smote upon his breast, and said the few words: 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!'"

The peasants and common townfolk understood. They knew that the tax-man was genuine. He meant what he said. He did not pretend to be better than he really was. They loved him.

A very different way Jesus had with the children. Mothers and fathers brought little maids and lads for him to touch with kindly hands of blessing. In these small folk he saw no make-believe, no pretence, no vain and priggish airs.

The Apostles, however, snubbed the parents, thinking the Master of the jinn would not care to be bothered with infants. They were mistaken. He said,—

"Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not: for of such is the Kingdom of God."

And, on the other hand, it was very difficult for wealthy men to enter that Kingdom. When a young man, who had large estates, was told to sell all that he had, and give the sale-money to the poor, and follow the Pioneer, he was sorrowful, and withdrew; for he could not give up his treasure. Then said Jesus,—

"It is easier for a camel to wriggle through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to get into the Kingdom of God."

* * * *

Anybody can see that the man who wrote the Gospel of Luke had a very low opinion of riches and rich men;

and you see that his way of dealing with the selfish rich was to send them to the flames of Hades Below.

It may be worth while to note the good-humoured and smiling way in which the ancient Greeks expressed their scorn of the selfish rich. Their parable ran thus:

An Old Man of the Woods, pug-nosed, with bristle-hair, and goat-ears, wandered into the rose-gardens of rich Midas, King of Phrygia in Asia Minor. Servants seized the comic creature, tied him with rose-garlands, and led him to the King, who treated him with courtesy for ten days, and then took him back to his master, the god Dionysos.

"Well done," said Dionysos. "This is good of you, Midas. Ask of me any favour you like."

After thinking a short while, the King said,—

"Let all I touch turn to gold."

Yet he had heaps of treasure already!

The boon was granted. How charming! He touched grass, it changed to golden blades; trees became gold; the very stones were turned to nuggets. But, alas! when a meal was set before royalty, the gift appeared a misery. Who could drink gold? Who could eat it? Who could live on it? Who would not long to lose the fatal favour? And Dionysos, in pity and in laughter, bade Midas bathe in the stream of Pactolus, and wash away the beautiful, but horrible, spell! We are not surprised to hear that it was the same thick-headed Midas who said he thought the tootle of Pan's mouth-organ was more musical than the glorious sound of Apollo's seven-stringed lyre; whereupon Apollo gave Midas the ears of an ass. For there are some unhappy people who neither know the use of ears, nor the use of wealth.

F. J. GOULD.

Correspondence.

GOD AND THE WAR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Your correspondent, Mr. A. Russell, claims that God has been absolutely neutral during the present War. It is really very difficult to come to any other conclusion. We have witnessed so-called Christian nations killing and mutilating one another with all the weapons that science has put into their hands. These same Christian nations have been long praying to God to give them the victory, because they each claim that they are fighting for a just cause.

So far, we have seen victory resting with the big battalions, rather than with the half-trained crowds. The question is, What are we fighting about? The answer undoubtedly is, That we are fighting for the food that is in the world. We may call it "Economic Pressure," but it is really for the food that we are fighting.

The teachings of Christ and the early Christian Church do not appear to give any countenance to warfare, and the Christian religion is, on that account, quite at variance with the old Jewish religion, which undoubtedly spelt "Militarism" and the destruction of one's enemies.

The law of "The Struggle for Existence and Survival of the Fittest" rules the world, and so long as that law holds good, so long must we go on fighting, and shall continue to turn this fair world into a hell more awful than anything dreamt of by Dante. All the religions of the world have proved themselves to be but empty cymbals.

Our salvation lies in studying Nature's laws and their effects. The Book of Nature lies open before us, her writing is easy to decipher, and we should make it our business to read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest the lessons she teaches us.

C. RUSSELL (Major).

MEN, MONEY, AND THE WAR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I protest at the tone and temper of an article entitled "The Blank Wall" in your current issue. To sneer

at the War Loan and those who invest in it is to sneer at the cause of the Allies and humanity's effort to destroy Prussian militarism. The *Freethinker* desires to percolate the trenches; then let it be loyal to the men in the trenches, and not come between them and those who can shorten their torments by helping to defeat the enemy of civilization with the resources of civilization. The best thing that could be recorded to the credit of money would be a victory over the Prussian ideal; and failure to achieve that victory by applying our money to any meaner purpose will redound to our everlasting shame.

If men and money are not the only means to destroy forever Prussian militarism, let us hear what others exist.

The "commercial force" which has lately found silver bullets to keep the flag of the *Freethinker* flying was not "low and corrupt." Does it become so when employed to keep the national flag flying?

That is a dangerous opinion, and can be called by a very hard and ugly name.

I venture to hope we may have an editorial pronouncement on the *Freethinker's* attitude to the War, for sentiments of this sort will make enemies of our friends.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

[The policy of the *Freethinker* is to provide a platform, so far as is possible, for all questions having a broad human interest. Each article is signed, and the writer is alone responsible for the opinions expressed. The editorial responsibility consists in seeing that the writer represents a point of view worthy of consideration. This has always been the policy of the *Freethinker*, and that policy is now more than ever necessary, when the ordinary press will, for the most part, publish only standardized opinions.]

For the rest, we do not see that Mr. Thorn's note is at all disloyal to the men in the trenches, or that it is intended as a discouragement to any prospective investor in War Loan. No one admires more than ourselves the heroism of the men in the trenches, or appreciates more deeply all they are doing to bring this War to a desirable end. These things may be taken for granted between men of decency and intelligence. We take Mr. Thorn to be making a protest against the picture of preachers of a universal religion playing the part of recruiting agents—a protest which does not deny either the justice of the War or the necessity for the State receiving financial support in its prosecution. A second protest is against the over-emphasis of the power of money as a deciding factor in human affairs, and the exaltation of the "money-fetish." This protest against the exaltation of money over and above the more human and idealistic elements in the War, is, in our opinion, deserving of publicity, and in this, we think, Mr. Phillpotts himself will concur. And certainly the picture of a man growing wealthy by forcing up prices, and then salving his conscience by investing part of his war profits—at a high rate of interest—is anything but a desirable one. Finally, in order to avoid misunderstanding, it may be as well to say that we have no greater desire to "percolate the trenches," than we have to penetrate other sections of the community. We desire to be read by all.—EDITOR.]

Society News.

We have not anything of a very exciting nature to report concerning our season's open-air work. The meetings have been continued throughout the whole of the summer months, and the audiences have been large and attentive. This, in spite of the rowdy attentions of a certain Christian Evidence champion, who seems to be a survival of the worst type of Christian blackguardism of thirty years ago. He appears to take an insane enjoyment in exhibiting himself in the most ridiculous light, and as this in itself does not constitute a legal offence, he must be left with his hobby.

Our collections are always small, but that is not so discouraging as appears at first sight. An audience of Freethinkers would contribute more liberally, and the smallness of the collections argues that the vast majority of our listeners are not wholly sympathetic with us—which is exactly the class we are desirous of reaching.

May I be permitted a grumble? I have been often struck by the frequency with which those who have given up their Christianity, as a result of our propaganda, fail to do all they might to help others to attain the same liberation as themselves. This should not be, and I hope this complaint will have the desired effect.

Still, we congratulate ourselves on having so successfully carried through the season in the midst of war, and in spite of very many difficulties. We are content that we have done our duty to the grand cause of humanity and freedom.—W. GREGORY, *Hon. Sec.*, Kingsland Branch, N. S. S.

On Sunday evening last Mr. T. F. Palmer delivered a very able lecture on "Christianity at the Bar of History" at the Trade Union Hall, 30, Brixton Road. The lecturer formulated an unanswerable indictment against Christianity as an obstacle to national and social progress throughout the centuries from its invention to the present time. He invited the attention of an appreciative audience (numbering about fifty) and elicited an interesting discussion. Mr. Victor Roger occupied the chair in the absence of their President at the commencement of the meeting.—W. OWEN, *Sec.*, South London Branch N. S. S.

A WITCH TRIAL.

In the Good Old (Christian) Times.

Towards the end of 1593 there was trouble in the family of the Earl of Orkney. His brother laid a plot to murder him, and was said to have sought the help of a "notorious witch" called Alison Balfour. When Alison Balfour's life was looked into, no evidence could be found connecting her either with the particular offence or with witchcraft in general; but it was enough in these matters to be accused. She swore she was innocent; but her guilt was only held to be aggravated by perjury. She was tortured again and again. Her legs were put in the *caschilaws*—an iron frame which was gradually heated till it burned into the flesh—but no confession could be wrung from her. The *caschilaws* failed utterly, and something else had to be tried. She had a husband, a son, and a daughter, a child seven years old. As her own sufferings did not work upon her, she might be touched, perhaps, by the sufferings of those who were dear to her. They were brought into court, and placed at her side; and the husband first was placed in the "lang irons"—some accursed instrument; I know not what. Still, the Devil did not yield. She bore this; and her son was next operated on. The boy's legs were set in "the boot,"—the iron boot you may have heard of. The wedges were driven in, which, when forced home, crushed the very bone and marrow. Fifty-seven mallet strokes were delivered upon the wedges. Yet this, too, failed. There was no confession yet. So, last of all, the little daughter was taken. There was a machine called the *piniwinkies*—a kind of thumb-screw, which brought blood from under the finger nails, with a pain successfully terrible. These things were applied to the poor child's hands, and the mother's constancy broke down, and she said she would admit anything they wished. She confessed her witchcraft—so tried, she would have confessed to the seven deadly sins—and then she was burned, recalling her confession, and with her last breath protesting her innocence.—J. A. Froude, "*Short Studies on Great Subjects.*"

Obituary.

Leicester friends will be sorry to hear of the death of Anna Maria Coltman (aged 56), daughter-in-law of Thomas Coltman, who was a colleague of Josiah Gimson, Michael Wright, W. H. Holyoak, and other prominent members of the Secular Society, before and after the opening of the Hall in 1881. Mrs. Coltman was active in the Society's work till she left Leicester in 1903; she aided the South London Ethical Society, and supported the Socialist Movement. The address at her cremation at Norwood was given by F. J. Gould, on Wednesday, November 14.

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.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, "The Transmission of Acquired Characteristics." Opened by Percy S. Wilde. Reply by T. F. Palmer.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Tube Station): 7, A. D. Howell Smith, B.A., "The Consolations of Religion and Freethought."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GOLDTHORPE BRANCH N. S. S. (14 Beevor Street): 7, Members Meeting. Local Secularists invited.

NEW MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Bakers' Hall, 56 Swan Street): 6.30, Mr. Monks, "The Problem of Divorce."

NUNEATON (The Palace, Queen's Road): Chapman Cohen, 2.45, "Do the Dead Live?" 6.30, "Is Christianity a Failure?"

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Dockers' Hall, 1, Elysium, High Street): Joseph McCabe, 3, "The Churches and Social Progress"; 7, "The Religion of H. G. Wells and G. B. Shaw."

GOD AND THE AIR-RAID.

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