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Views and Opinions.

The Clergy and Education.

Nothing shows the meanness of disposition generated by a professional advocacy of Christianity more than the attitude of the clergy in relation to Germany during the course of the War. No sooner had the War commenced, and the stories of German barbarities in Belgium been received in this country, than the "Black Army" saw its opportunity. German conduct was due to the growth of "Materialism" and of freethinking. Germany had, so it was said, "repudiated Christianity," and ignorant persons were led to conceive an assembly of German leaders formally rejecting Christianity and solemnly adopting Freethought. Before the War commenced, these same people had dwelt upon the natural piety of the German character as against France, which was painted as decadent, and growing in immorality in consequence of the complete disestablishment of Christianity in all departments of the State. Ignored was the fact that, with the exception of France, all the countries engaged in the War were officially and overwhelmingly Christian; as also was the more important consideration that the nations of Europe had centuries of Christian tradition behind them, and that if Christian education had really made for peace, war would by now have been impossible. The clergy played their old mean and dishonest game. Their policy is, "Whatever is bad or objectionable, label unchristian, or atheistic, or infidel." The sensible ones may smile, but the foolish ones will be deceived. And sensible people always represent a minority of the population.

* * *

The Secular Solution.

When the question of education began to force its way to the front—owing to the action of a handful of enthusiasts, for the British public cares very little about education at any time—the clergy saw their opportunity for a little more propaganda. For years the clergy have been watching with dread the approach of what is known as the Secular Solution of the education question. All this means in practice is that, the State shall concern itself only with such subjects as are the common con-

cern of all citizens. It does not oppose Christianity, neither does it help it. It leaves Christian parents and Christian parsons complete freedom to teach whatever religion they like to the children, while it confines its own efforts to such subjects as are defined in the Education Code as "secular." But this will not suit the clergy. If they cannot get the children, whom can they hope to get? Not the mature adult. He is quite beyond their reach. With them it is a case of the child or nothing. If they cannot capture the lamb, they can never hope to control the sheep. And the main purpose of breeding sheep is shearing. So the clergy know that, once the children escape their hands, the source of supply for church and chapel is cut off. Hence the resistance to what is so generally admitted amongst men of understanding with no ulterior purpose to serve, as the only logical and honest way out. If the child is not caught, the adult is lost. Religious belief is the one thing that cannot wait for acceptance until people are old enough to understand it.

* * *

A Timely Corrective.

So when the question of the reconstruction of our educational system arose for discussion, the clergy saw, or thought they saw, their chance. Warnings began to multiply as to the danger of our imitating Germany by not giving religion a very prominent place in the State schools. Thus, the Rev. Stanley Rogers, a leading dissenter, said:—

Do we not need to keep in mind the Duke of Wellington's warning: "Educate children without religion, and you will make a race of clever devils?" German Kultur has achieved this result. Do we wish to imitate Germany in this?

And the Hon. Sec. of the Chichester Diocesan Committee of Religious Education declared:—

Unless religion were to be the guiding principle of our system of education, the only effect of educational reforms might be that their children would be more efficiently trained to earn their livelihood than before.Who, with the repulsive example of Germany before us, would be satisfied with such a result?

Finally, Lord Pormoor assured the public that:—

In the German schools and in German life the people were taught that the nation came first, and all that was moral and Christian came second.

Many similar statements are made, all equally dogmatic, and all equally false. Their falsity has been promptly noted and pilloried in an admirable four-page pamphlet issued by the Secular Education League, and from which we have taken the above expressions of opinion. We are, indeed, writing these notes chiefly with the object of calling the attention of *Freethinker* readers to its existence. It is a trenchant and serviceable piece of writing, and we would like Freethinkers everywhere, to get to work and see that it is distributed broadcast. Particulars will be found on the back page of this issue, and its widespread circulation may serve to do something to check this latest clerical lie on behalf of a mischievous and unjust system.

Germany and Christian Education.

German Crime and Secular Education is the title of the pamphlet, and the Committee meets the charge that German crime is due to the prevalence of Secular Education in a most effective way. It cites from the clergy themselves, and from educational authorities, to prove that German education is saturated with Christian instruction of the most pronounced form. Thus:—

The children are religiously instructed in Germany, the religious teaching is as definite as heart could desire in Germany.—Canon Edward Rees, *Church Quarterly Review*, p. 324, January, 1908.

The religious lesson is regarded as the most important, and a religious atmosphere is expected to pervade the school.—From the *Report of an International Inquiry into Moral Instruction*, vol. ii., p. 218, edited by Professor Sadler.

It must not be imagined, however, that in the reforms suggested there is any thought of abandoning religious instruction in the schools. Such an idea would be entirely repugnant to the German mind.—Dr. Garber, *Annals of Educational Progress in 1910*, p. 311.

In Germany the Luthern child carries in his knapsack three books—a Bible, a Hymn Book, and Luther's Catechism—in which he receives instruction every morning by teachers of his own faith and at the public cost.....the same right is extended to all religious bodies.....there are no timid half measures.—The Rev. G. Longridge, *National Education* (Mirfield Manuals, No. 45).

The Prussian systems remains to-day both for Catholics and Protestants essentially denominational. All schools, whether elementary or secondary, are Evangelical, Catholic, Jewish, or mixed.....In all cases the teachers are appointed with reference to religious faith; religious instruction is given compulsorily in school hours, and is inspected by the clergy.—*Encycl. Britannica*; 11th ed. s.v. "Education," 8, p. 965 d.

Religious instruction is a compulsory subject in all German schools, and very great importance is attributed to it. Special teaching is provided for children of each different faith—for Evangelical, Roman Catholic, and Jewish. The aim of the instruction is clearly stated.—*Board of Education*.

Special importance is attached to religious instruction.....History, whether sacred or profane, is always history in which the child may learn to see the hand of Providence at work, to admire what is noble and despise what is base.....When the children first come to school they are about six years old. They learn four things—Religion, German, Arithmetic, and Singing—so long as they remain in the *Unterstufe*.—Pp. 314, 315.

In the two German countries (Prussia and Saxony) all the schools are denominational, and the State insists upon the religious instruction of every child of whatever creed.—*Special Reports on Educational Subjects*, vol. ix., p. 230, 352.

The end of the Evangelical religious teaching is the initiation of the children into the understanding of the Holy Scriptures and into the beliefs of the Church, in order that the children may become capable of reading the Holy Scriptures for themselves, and take a living part in the religious services and in the life of the Church.—*Prussian Allgemeine Bestimmungen*.

Four hours weekly are devoted to religious instruction in the Primary School, except in the middle and upper sections, which have one class only, where five hours are thus absorbed. In addition, religious instruction enters in other ways, more especially in the teaching of German and History.—*Moral Education in Eighteen Countries*, p. 233.

The chief factor in the moral education given in our German schools is denominational religious instruction and teaching of the Catechism.—Rector G. Hoef, Hamburg; Paper presented to the International Moral Education Congress, The Hague, 1912.

In Germany the greatest care had apparently been

taken of the religious education of the children.—Bishop of Southwell, *Nottingham Guardian*, March 3, 1917.

* * *

Driving Home the Moral.

It would be almost impossible to give a more crushing or more effective reply to the clerical calumny than is here given. It is not alone a calumny on Freethought; it is an insult to the noblest and the most sanely idealistic of our Allies—the French nation. For there Secular Education is an accomplished fact; and if the assumed neglect of religious education has led to demoralization in Germany, if the establishment of Secular Education will lead to demoralization in England, what are we to say of France? Are we to say the French are merely a race of "clever devils"; that the same "repulsive example" will ensue in France as in Germany, and as we are warned will occur here? Or are we to conclude that we have here one more example of the lack of truthfulness and responsibility that almost habitually accompany the utterances of our clergy? The pamphlet from which we have so lengthily, but we think so serviceably quoted, well says:—

If the German crimes are falsely attributed to the Secular Solution, it may be legitimately pointed out that it is not the Germans, but the French, who have established complete Secular National Education. And if the Secular Solution *v.* Religious Teaching by the State were brought before the entire world for judgment, to be tested by their respective moral results in Germany and France, the world condemnation of that German brutality which marks the lowest degradation of humanity would put out of court a State System of Religious Teaching, which has been powerless to prevent that degradation, and award the palm to a Secular System of State Education such as obtains in France, whose standard of honour in the conduct of the War commands the homage of the civilized world.

This is finely put, and we hope that all friends of Secular Education will see to it that this pamphlet is widely circulated. It is an appeal to facts; and the facts, here as elsewhere, are fatal to the claims of orthodox and established Christianity.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Befogged Apologetics.

It is a notorious characteristic of Christianity that from the beginning of its history until now it has been adapting itself to the ever-varying conditions of intellectual and moral life among its actual and potential converts. At bottom it has always been the sworn enemy of natural knowledge, and during the days of its supremacy succeeded in almost entirely suppressing it. To this day Spain has never recovered her intellectual independence which the brutal Inquisition so completely destroyed. In most other lands, however, the Ages of Faith, or Dark Ages, came to an end, and as an inevitable accompaniment of the Renaissance came the Protestant Reformation, with its religiously undermining principle of Private Judgment. No history has yet disclosed the true inwardness of the Revival of Learning; and all we feel justified in saying about the movement here is that it was totally non-Christian in its origin and essentially anti-Christian in its influence. It may be generally described as the revival of a learning which Christianity had doomed, by means of physical force, to a deplorably long period of suspended animation. We may say that ever since the conquest of Spain by the Arabs in the eighth century, the Renaissance had been in active operation, but only as a sort of underground movement, while in the twelfth century it came to the surface, and was enthusiastically welcomed by some Popes and other

dignitaries of the Church, a few of whom came perilously near to renouncing Christianity in its favour. Later on a powerful reaction occurred which proved the salvation of the Catholic Church; but Protestantism, splitting up into numerous more or less hostile sects, became, in spite of itself, an ally of the Renaissance. At first, many of these sects vigorously opposed every scientific advance, dreading its triumph as a menace to its own existence, but ultimately relinquishing, as quietly as possible, some of its formerly most dearly cherished dogmas in order to adopt the new knowledge as a perfectly harmonious adjunct to itself. The divines explained that curious process by declaring that the discarded tenets had never been essential articles in the Christian Creed.

The foregoing observations were suggested by the leading article, entitled, "Religion which is not Religious," in the *Christian Commonwealth* for November 21, presumably from the pen of the editor, Mr. Dawson, who possesses a commendably hospitable mind. The leader opens thus:—

The Christian religion has been greatly overweighted with things not essentially religious—that is, ethical and spiritual in their influence. It has not, like the Samaritan, fallen among thieves who have stripped it, but it has rather fallen among those who have encumbered it with things alien from its essential spirit, and which have proved impediments to its work and influence in the world.

Mr. Dawson is a man whom we, for several reasons, greatly admire; but we are bound to characterize his attitude to the divines of the past as the opposite to complimentary. He evidently forgets that the things which he regards as non-essential to Christianity were looked upon by Paul, Augustine, and Calvin as vital parts thereof, and that no idea of challenging them occurred to the generality of believers until science had made discoveries which discredited them. Mr. Dawson is not at all happy in his illustrations. He says:—

For example, it has been deemed essential that its adherents should accept certain views as to the origin of the physical world, the time of man's appearance upon it, the mode of his development, and many other similar questions. These are not really religious questions: they belong to the realm of geology, physics, astronomy, anthropology. All that is vital to belief in these realms is faith in the Divine origin of the world and humanity.

This is the New Theology with a vengeance, and, as usual, it confuses the issues without a qualm. We do not know to what extent Mr. Dawson treats the Bible as Divinely inspired; but his being a Christian at all bears witness to the fact that he considers some part of it to be of Divine authority. The point is, however, that prior to the birth of modern science the Church taught, in the most dogmatic manner, that the origin of the physical universe and of man were pre-eminently religious questions. The first three chapters of Genesis were accepted as a purely historical record. Christianity is presented in the New Testament as a Divine provision to counteract and eradicate all the consequences of the fall sustained in Eden. Among those disastrous penalties was death, the death of the body no less than of the soul. Christ was the second Adam, whose mission was to give humanity a new start. Paul believed that "through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin," and the Gospel he had to preach is summed up thus: "If by the trespass of one the many died, much more did the grace of God, and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound unto the many." Is Mr. Dawson prepared to say openly that Paul's eyangel was fundamentally false? Mr. Campbell indulged in that admission in his heretical days, and

was applauded by a Thursday noon congregation. It should be borne in mind that Paul claimed to have received his Gospel by a special revelation from heaven. If it be admitted that he was radically mistaken, are we not thereby entitled to doubt every other claim of a like nature? But, in that case, on what ground does Mr. Dawson believe in "the Divine origin of the world and humanity"? Science knows nothing of such an origin of either, evolution being the only process it has to deal with. Even Sir Oliver Lodge is scientifically orthodox on this point.

We are in substantial agreement with Mr. Dawson as to the non-religious character of the evolutionary process. Like him we prefer the testimony of the rocks to that of Genesis; but, then, we do not believe in the Divine origin either of the world or of man. We also endorse much of what he avers concerning the future of the world. We heartily concur in his condemnation of a manifesto signed by ten clergymen, entitled "The Significance of the Hour." We have not seen that manifesto; but among its details, our editor tells us, are the following:—

That the present crisis points towards the close of the times of the Gentiles; that the revelation of our Lord may be expected at any moment, when he will be manifested as evidently to the disciples as on the evening of his resurrection; that the completed Church will be translated to be for ever with the Lord; that Israel will be restored to its own land in unbelief, and be afterwards converted by the appearance of Christ on its behalf; that all human schemes of reconstruction must be subsidiary to the coming of our Lord, because all nations will then be subject to his rule.

We beg to remind Mr. Dawson that the manifesto is not without Scriptural warrant, not only in the Books of Daniel and Revelation, but also in the Gospels and Pauline Epistles. We even venture to exonerate those ten clergymen from the charge of founding their manifesto upon an "unbalanced interpretation" of Holy Writ. We are convinced that all they advocate in the extract just given is a fair deduction from Biblical statements. We repudiate the manifesto only on the score that the Scripture warrant for it is as valueless as itself. It is true, no doubt, that "in a vast library like the Bible, by an unbalanced interpretation almost anything can be supported"; but it is equally true that the Gospel Jesus speaks of the expediency of his departure from his disciples, and of the certainty of his returning to them again; and the latter event is described with as much emphasis as the former. Just here Mr. Dawson is guilty of considerable quibbling. The Gospel Jesus is by no means consistent in his various references to his own future. He tells the disciples that it is expedient for him to go away, that the Holy Ghost may come and take his place, and yet in the same breath he assures them that he himself will be present with them to the end of time. The curious thing is that it does not occur to Mr. Dawson that the truth on this whole subject is expressed by Professor Gilbert Murray in his suggestive article in the *R. P. A. Annual* for 1918, when he declares that "neither the doctrines stated in the Creeds nor the supposed history contained in the Gospels will bear examination." If the Professor is right, as we think he is, then all appeals to the Gospels are absolutely in vain, whatever interpretation of the mere words may be adopted.

We are further convinced that all appeals to Christian history are fully as vain. Are not the supposed reign of Christ in the world, and his never-failing presence in the hearts of his people, guiding them in all their ways, the emptiest of dreams? Are the conditions of life in Europe at this moment a credit to the all-loving,

all-powerful, and all-conquering Saviour of the world? We do not hesitate to assert that the Christian religion, judged by its history and present influence in the world, must be pronounced, not only a tragic failure, but also fundamentally and absolutely false.

J. T. LLOYD.

The Tradesman's Touch.

The art of the pen is to rouse the inward vision, instead of labouring with a drop-scene brush.—*George Meredith.*

Who is Mr. Hall Caine?—*Bernard Shaw.*

THAT modest writer, Mr. Hall Caine, is fortunate in having publishers who are unlike himself, for seldom are any books heralded with such blare of trumpets as his novels. These industrious and enterprising tradesmen announce a cheap edition of Mr. Caine's *The Woman Thou Gavest Me* as "a love-story for all the world and for all time," and add that 400,000 copies have already been sold. They also inform the reading public that hundreds of thousands of his previous novels have been sold, and that the latest story has been translated into sixteen languages, including Japanese and Yiddish.

The reasons for a popularity such as this are worth considering, for, if foreign sales come anywhere near the English purchases, it may be assumed that contemporary English fiction is represented in Europe by Mr. Caine, as French literary art is by Anatole France, Belgian by Maurice Maeterlinck, Italian by Gabriele D'Annunzio, Russian by Maxim Gorky, and German by Herman Suderman.

Yet some people, not wholly illiterate, have been known to admit that they could only regard Mr. Caine's tremendous popularity with wonder and amazement. The genius of Hardy and Meredith, as of Shelley and Keats before them, dawned slowly upon the general reader. But here is a writer of novels whose books run into new editions as fast as the printing presses and the bookbinders can supply them. Like Miss Marie Corelli and Mr. Charles Garvice, he has succeeded in winning the hearts of myriads of readers. What these stern moralists are to the worldly minded, Mr. Hall Caine is to the other worldly minded. In each, vulgar, but virtuous ordinary folk and grotesque villains win the appreciation of their readers. Mr. Caine represents this taste, with the addition of an affectation of realism, and the ethics of an invertebrate Christianity.

In his latest work, *The Woman Thou Gavest Me*, Mr. Caine breaks no fresh ground, but tells a commonplace love-story in strident tones, and with much elaboration of detail. Although occupying many pages of close print, the plot can be told in a few words. A woman is married by force to a profligate brute; gets disgusted with her husband; loves an Arctic explorer; gives birth to an illegitimate child; and dies of consumption. The characters in the novel are older than the everlasting hills. There is not a single portrait of an actual personality; but only personifications of bravery, self-sacrifice, profligacy, greed, and so forth.

The story, it will be seen, is frankly popular, and, incidentally, presents a considerable opportunity for introducing theatrical effects, and the author's fondness for the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, Mr. Caine takes nothing for granted, and "wallows naked in the pathetic." Naturally, the explorer must be an Arctic one, and, when his mistress is suffering, by some theatrical telepathy, he hears her voice calling him over thousands of miles of space. Mary O'Neill, the heroine, is what our American cousins call "a Continental idiot." Forced into a loveless marriage with an almost unknown man, she has not sufficient sense to earn her own living

after leaving her husband, and gets consumption through drying her baby's wet clothes on her own body. Although madly in love with an explorer, she does not read the newspapers to be informed of the expedition, and she starves herself in order that her child may be strong and healthy. Frankly, the book is altogether unreal and melodramatic, for, when the heroine is forced by poverty to solicit in Piccadilly, the only person she accosts is her long-lost explorer.

Mr. Caine tickles the long ears of the groundlings with Biblical phrases. The title strikes the key-note, and Mary's narrative begins with the following words:—

Out of the depths, O Lord, out of the depths, begins the most beautiful of the services of our Church, and it is out of the depths of my life that I must bring the incidents of this story.

The ending has the same air of striking novelty:—

Very soon the mist will rise, and the day will break, and the sun will come again and—there will be no more night.

These were the last words penned by Mary before her gentle and tortured spirit took flight from earth.

It is enough to break a "gentle and tortured" critic's heart. However, Mr. Hall Caine is giving pleasure to hundreds of thousands of English, Yiddish, Japanese, and other readers; and no great harm is done, if, in reading his work, they cherish the pleasing delusion that they are reading really great English literature, fresh from the hand of a master of his art. Since, however, Mr. Caine plainly labours under the belief that he is a great writer, it is a pity that he cannot be enlightened. He has won an enormous body of readers precisely because he is not a genius. Why should he not be content? Why should he dream that he is a brother to Thomas Hardy and George Meredith, to Anatole France and Gabriele D'Annunzio? He is the universal provider of the circulating libraries, and is as little an artist as any other manufacturer.

MIMNERMUS.

The Bible and Immortality.

THE BOOK OF ENOCH THE PROPHET.

ABOUT a century before the commencement of the Christian Era, a new book of an apocalyptic nature came into circulation among the Jewish people; but for some unknown reason it failed to secure a place in the Hebrew canon or even in the so-called Apocrypha. This book was widely read, and after being handed down to apostolic and later times, was received by Christians as "the word of God." The work of fiction to which reference is here made was called "The Book of Enoch the Prophet," and it claimed in its pages to have been written by the Enoch who is said to have lived before the Deluge. Of this mythical individual it is recorded in Genesis v. 24:—

And Enoch walked with God: and he was not; for God took him.

The latter statement is generally understood to mean that Enoch, like the prophet Elijah, was taken to heaven without dying—and such is implied in the book itself. This literary forgery is named in the New Testament by the apostle Jude, who quotes from it as a genuine and inspired prophetic writing. After speaking of the "ungodly men" of his own day, who denied "our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ," and railed at things they did not understand, Jude says:—

And of these also Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his holy ones, to execute judgment upon all, and to convict all the ungodly of all their works of

ungodliness which they have ungodly committed, etc.—
(Jude 14, 15).

The line of ante-diluvian patriarchs in Genesis v. reads: Adam, Seth, Enoch, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, *Enoch*, etc. The last-named patriarch was, in the opinion of Jude, the writer of the book from which he had quoted. The Christian "father," Tertullian, who was of the same opinion, tells us that when the great flood came upon the earth three generations later, Noah saved the book from destruction by taking it into the ark.

For many years the Book of Enoch, which was frequently quoted by the early Christians, was believed to have been lost; but, in 1773, Bruce, the Abyssinian traveller, found an Ethiopian version in the Abyssinian Bible, and brought three copies to Europe, one of which was presented to the University of Oxford—where it remained untranslated until 1821. In the recovered "Enoch" Jude's quotation is found. Jude says again:—

And angels which kept not their own principality, but left their proper habitation, He hath kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.—(Jude 6).

This is not a quotation from "Enoch"; it is merely a statement of matter contained in the book. The "angels" mentioned by Jude were the "sons of God" who left heaven to take the "daughters of men" as wives (Gen. vi. 2, 4). Those angels figure in the Book of Enoch, where they are temporarily punished as Jude states; but their doom on the day of judgment, an angel informed Enoch, was already sealed; they are to be cast alive into a valley of liquid fire. It was from this book that the writer of the Book of Revelation took his "lake of fire" (Rev. xix. 20; xx. 10, 14, 15; xxi. 6). The term "sons of God" in Gen. vi. is rendered "angels" in the Alexandrian MS., and also by Josephus.

The Book of Enoch calls for a thorough re-arrangement; in many places it reads like a number of independent tracts, without beginning or end, that have become intermixed; statements are made again and again in nearly the same words, though the praise of the righteous and the condemnation of the ungodly pervade the whole book. The Hebrew deity is mostly spoken of as the "Lord of spirits" or the "Mighty One," though sometimes called "the Lord." Mention is made in several parts of the book of a "Son of man," also called "the Elect One," into whose hand is to be given the judgment of the nations upon the Great day—which personage is evidently the "Son of man" in the Gospels. The Book of Enoch is, in some respects, a key to the evolution of Christianity, much of its language and ideas being found in the New Testament.

Coming now to the question of immortality, there are many statements on the subject throughout the book, the examples selected here being those most clearly expressed:—

Chap. 61.—Then shall the Lord of spirits hasten to expel the ungodly from his presence.....The angels shall take them to punishment, that vengeance may be inflicted on those who have oppressed his elect.....But the saints and the elect shall be safe in that day. The Lord of spirits shall remain over them: and with the Son of man shall they dwell, eat, lie down, and rise up, for ever and ever.

Chap. 66.—Blessed are ye, O saints and elect, for glorious is your lot. The saints shall exist in the light of the sun, and the elect in the light of everlasting life, the days of whose life shall never terminate; nor shall the days of the saints be numbered, who seek for light and obtain righteousness with the Lord of spirits.

Chap. 99.—In that day shall the Most High execute

judgment upon all sinners, and commit the guardianship of all the righteous to the holy angels.....Woe to you, ye sinners; for with the words of your mouths, and with the works of your hands, have you acted impiously: in the flame of blazing fire shall you be burnt.

From the foregoing paragraphs it would seem that it was not merely the soul or spirit that should enjoy a peaceful life after death, but the whole man, with his earthly body. To eat, lie down to rest, and wake up refreshed, clearly point to the latter. Towards the end of the book, however, the spirit of man is mentioned—a fact which suggests a later writer and date. The book is considered by all competent critics to contain several strata, all pre-Christian. The following are examples:—

Chap. 102.—Fear not, ye souls of the righteous; but wait with patient hope for the day of your death in righteousness. Grieve not because your souls descend in great trouble to the receptacle of the dead.....And when you die, sinners say concerning you, As we die, the righteous die. What profit have they in their works? Behold they are dead; and never will they again perceive the light.

Chap. 103.—But now I swear to you, ye righteous..... that all goodness, joy, and glory has been prepared for you, and for the spirits of them who die righteous and good.....The spirits of you who die in righteousness shall exist and rejoice. Your spirits shall exult before the face of the Mighty One from generation to generation.

Chap. 103.—Woe to you, ye sinners, when you die in your sins; and they who are like you say, Blessed are these sinners: they have lived out their whole life, and now they die in happiness and wealth.....But has it not been shown to them that, when to the receptacle of the dead their souls shall be made to descend, their evil deeds shall become their greatest torment? Into darkness, into the snare, and into the flame, which shall burn at the great judgment, shall their spirits enter; and the great judgment shall take effect for ever and ever.

In these later paragraphs the "receptacle of the dead" is, of course, the Underworld, which the veracious Enoch states had been shown to him by an angel. All the "spirits of the dead" were to lie in this dark and dreary place until the day of judgment. In the Old Testament times they remained there for ever, as in the following example:—

Chap. 22.—A receptacle of this sort has been made for the souls of unrighteous men and of sinners..... Their souls shall not be annihilated in the day of judgment, neither shall they arise from this place.

The "receptacle" here spoken of had been shown to Enoch, and was, apparently, a huge tunnel under a mountain, with a smooth floor. It was deep and dark, and it contained no fire.

One useful purpose, from another point of view, is served by the book: in its pages we learn something of what was thought of the Universe and natural phenomena at the time it was written. This portion can best be described in the words of a certain American reviewer of Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* as "a heap of clotted nonsense." The following are examples: Enoch tells us that an angel showed him "the receptacle of light and thunder," in which places he saw "bows and arrows of fire, a sword of fire, and every species of lightning." He also "surveyed the receptacles of all the winds" as well as the receptacles in which the Lord of spirits kept the hail, snow, and clouds before they were sent out upon the earth. He saw "the stone which supports one of the corners of the earth," and he "beheld the four winds which bear up the earth and the firmament of heaven," as well as "the winds which turn the sky, and cause the sun and stars to set." At the "extremities of the earth, where heaven ceased," he saw "the gates of heaven open and the celestial stars come forth." He "num-

bered them as they proceeded out of the gates," and the angel Uriel told him their names. He says of the sun and moon "the dimensions of both are equal," and that each is carried through the air on a chariot, which "the wind blows." Light, he says, "is given to the moon by measure," and Uriel showed him how "the light is poured into the moon from the sun."

Thus, besides being an inspired guide to heaven, the Book of Enoch was a complete text-book of science, from which the early Christians, including Jude and the other apostles, took their ideas of the Universe.

ABRACADABRA.

The Bhagavad Gita.

It is one of the chief delights of Freethought to be able to roam at will over the world's philosophy, to stand on hills breathing the pure air of truths that never caused a tear, to walk in valleys where bloom the fairest flowers of contentment, or to stand, like Plato, in the shadow of a wall. Therefore, without misgivings, we shall endeavour to examine the book with the above title—a labour of love to perform, and, we trust, with profit and delight to our readers.

At the outset, there is one quality in Freethought which is identical with Hindu philosophy, and that is meditation. No man or woman was ever convinced in a day of the truth of Freethought. Needless to say, a man may be an orthodox Christian, without thinking at all, and we believe that the last thing a priest would complain of would be the ignorance of his flock. If anyone, on the contrary, should take up a definite anti-Christian attitude, it cannot be maintained by any of the specious arguments gyrating round the Trinity. In brief, opposition to the fundamental beliefs of Christianity is not based on likes or dislikes, nor is it supported by dogmatism, nor can it be maintained by an easy-going indifference to truth.

Freethought demands from its followers that which priests desire to suppress. Whether it be compliment to Freethought from Hindu philosophy, or *vice-versa*, that they have meditation or thought in common must be left to each individual's choice—it is no great matter either way.

In the edition before us, Mrs. Annie Besant contributes a preface. With toleration we regard her remarks in reference to some one personified as "Him," and we find ourselves in agreement with the emphasis on the discharge of duty. However, we differ from her when she implies that this function must be discharged without seeking the result. To the mildly passive East this may be acceptable; but, as Freethinkers, we trust we shall always retain our true vision of cause and effect. If the Hindu sows regardless of the harvest, we can say that this attitude is noble and disinterested and worthy of admiration. Freethought has a definite function to perform, and its results can be judged by what organized religion has been forced to relinquish. If our propaganda had any material gain then we should have no case; but, as it is, our progress is slow and sure. It is safe to say that a thousand "leading" articles in such papers as the *Daily Mail* and the *Daily Mirror* against Freethought could not injure the movement. As "A.E.R.," in the *New Age*, has wittily said, the former daily paper was founded by Lord Northcliffe for those who could not think, and the latter for those who could not read; what the press has not made it cannot destroy; for the strength of Freethought does not lie in its popular appeal. If we discharge our duties as citizens of the world, it is with a definite object in view; and,

therefore, we sow with a definite purpose. In this respect Freethought differs from the teachings of the East. We are informed in the preface that "the spiritual man need not be a recluse, that union with the divine life may be achieved and maintained in the midst of worldly affairs, that the obstacles to that union lie not outside us but within us—such is the central lesson of the Bhagavad-Gita." The passivity of this doctrine is alluring, and in marked contrast to Christianity with its low water mark of brass bands as used by the Salvation Army; in fact, we are able to see that there is a difference between a religion and a philosophy. Philosophy starts on its journey from the East, and, during transit through Jerusalem and Rome, it becomes distorted by the time it reaches England. Trumpets and cymbals organs and incense—by these brutal and subtle methods shall mankind's sense be inclined into the necessary attitude towards one of the biggest shams ever erected on a foundation of ignorance. Beautiful truths that would lead man to the heaven of contentment—truths with laughter in them, these have been twisted by our modern bogeymen, called priests, who present them as a religion. Philosophy demands thought, religion whines for faith, and thought and faith are as fire and water.

In our copy we have made many underlinings. The first passage captivated us by its supreme nobility. Arjuna, the warrior-prince, is about to engage in conflict. To Krishna he says: "For I desire not victory, O Krishna, nor kingdom, nor pleasures; what is kingdom to us, O Govindu, what enjoyment, or even life?" We shall find it difficult to match this passage for detachment and disinterestedness. Again, this attitude, a purely philosophical one, differs from the modern religious view—a view, one might say, intensely materialistic, and, by temporal possessions ruling it out of the court where men do not wear spiritual blinkers.

Speaking of emotions and the senses, Krishna says: "The man whom these torment not, O chief of men, balanced in pain and pleasure, steadfast, he is fitted for immortality." These words will fall strangely on Western ears; yet, are they not the essentials of philosophy? Can Christians hunt with the hound of gold and ride with the hare of renunciation? They can, and do so; and we are apparently the only people who persist in pointing out the commercialism of this Western hotch-potch called Christianity. With this inconsistency of Materialism, false ethics flourish like the green bay-tree.

We should like to quote again and again from this little book; for us, it is ripe with ethical wisdom, and the reader will find that his study of the world's literature will assist him in understanding the teaching embodied in this volume. It is true to say that the ethics of Freethought are identical with those expounded in its pages. We part company, however, with this philosophy when it stresses the supernatural element and designates it as "Him" or the "Eternal."

"It is said that the senses are great; greater than the senses is the mind: greater than the mind is the Reason; but what is greater than the Reason, is He." If we had any proof of the existence of the being in the climax in this extract, we might abandon reason. Is not all this talk about "Him" but another aspect of the God idea? It is easy to conceive matter as being indestructible; we cannot take the evidence or suggestion of evidence as positive and final on the existence of the Eternal with its Hindu connotation. In the future, at some happier period, philosophy may have time to expand. Philosophy may even occupy then the prominent position now given to horse-racing. Until then, we must be content to work for the good of mankind in our own particular way. Looking back through the pages of history, we behold the God of the Old Testament, whose voice

is the thunder. In the New Testament he has changed, and we find him as a spirit. Later on, God is Love. Then the dissatisfied ones would say Love is God. Matthew Arnold revalued the God-idea when he wrote that "God is the eternal spirit making for righteousness"—which, of course, was only stating the matter in the same terms as the Hebrews, who valued righteousness chiefly as a social virtue. The art of God-making is quite easy to learn. Through looking steadfastly at the sun, we can imagine that we are a part of it; for the sake of convenience, we may call this the metaphysical side of the question. On the other hand, it is quite safe to say that we *are* a part of it, since we cannot exist without the sun. The warmth in our bodies is derived from it; through our eyes flow light, and our physical demands cannot be satisfied without the sun. Therefore, the sun is God to anyone who is content to accept this kind of reasoning. In the same way, we think the idea of "Him" or the "Eternal" came to life in the "Bhagavad Gita."

We feel sure that our readers will be well repaid by reading this little book, which is issued by the Theosophical Publishing House, at the modest price of sixpence. Whilst many will not subscribe to the idea we have remarked upon, all will enjoy the fruits of divine philosophy to be found in its pages. Pater made a broad sweep of a broad subject when he wrote:—

For the essence of humanism is that belief of which he seems never to have doubted, that nothing which has ever interested living men and women can wholly lose its vitality—no language they have spoken, nor oracle beside which they have hushed their voices, no dream which has once been entertained by actual human minds, nothing about which they have ever been passionate, or expended time and zeal.

This was the belief of Pica Della Mirandola. In this spirit we offer these few remarks on the "Bhagavad Gita," and conclude with a note of interrogation. Arjuna, the central figure in the story, receives inspiration to act regardless of consequences. The Arjuna type of person is one who neither desires anything nor fears anything. What are we to call this attitude to life? It has the appearance of dynamic passivity. How many Freethinkers would care to call themselves Arjunas?

WILLIAM REPTON.

Acid Drops.

We are glad to see that the American military authorities than our own are more alive to the freedom of the Army. The Commanding Officer at Fort Hamilton issued an order for all men to attend divine service. On this Mr. G. E. Macdonald, editor of the *Truthseeker*, wrote to the War Department asking what had become of the constitutional right to religious freedom? The reply of the Department was prompt and satisfactory, it contained the following passage:—

The Department Commander does not approve of the action of the Coast Defence Commander in requiring compulsory attendance at divine service of persons under his command. Necessary action will be taken accordingly.

This is quite to the point, and we wonder how long it will be before the British soldier will possess the same freedom. France can manage the War without official "divine service" of any kind. America can manage with "divine service" only for those who care to have it. Great Britain continues the policy of driving the men to Church whether they wish to go or not.

Apropos of the above, we were pleased to see a trenchant letter in a recent issue of the *Southampton Times*, from Mr. J. W. Wood, asking, as we have just done, "How long it will take Britain to level up to the American standard of liberty." Letters in such places do a considerable amount of good.

And the protest against "compulsory Christianity" is sadly needed. Men join the Army to do their duty as soldiers. To make them compulsory helpers at a ridiculous ceremony is an outrage on their manhood.

The Catholic magazine, the *Month*, contains an article, entitled "A Shakespeare Discovery—his Schoolmaster afterwards a Jesuit." This will hardly set the Thames afire. Shakespeare himself did not often trouble the pewopeners.

"Catholic Game. Day to Heaven" is the title of an advertisement in the *Universe*.

A memorial, signed by a number of leading Churchmen and Nonconformists, is being presented to the Prime Minister protesting against the proposed reform of the divine laws on the ground that it runs "counter to the consistent teaching of the Church of Christ from the beginning. But what has the Church of Christ to do with it? Any amendment of the marriage laws ought to rest upon the common sense and common needs of the community. To bother what the Church of Christ—with a celibate figure-head, and one half that Church with a celibate clergy—has to say about it is sheer absurdity. Of course the "Church of Christ" is against the charge. Its game is to keep the control of marriage in its own hands. If it controls marriage, it controls the mother, and through her the child. That is the bed-rock fact in the anxiety of the clergy.

One of our readers, at present "Somewhere in the Holy Land," sends us the following:—

A soldier was riding a mule up through a portion of the desert, and, being in a hurry, he was using a stick frequently. A padre stopped him and remonstrated with him. Said he: "Don't you know that our Lord rode up this very way and did not labour his mule. "That may be so," replied the soldier, "but he was not in such a hell of a hurry as I am. Gee-up."

The Duke of Argyll has been writing in the *Glasgow Herald*, and pointing out that Scotch Protestants do not appear to be in a hurry to celebrate the Reformation and "Dr. and Mrs. Martin Luther." The sneer at Luther is an unworthy one, for celibacy, as Horace Smith said wittily, is "a vow a man takes that he will enjoy none but other men's wives."

This is not the only example of the Duke of Argyll's humour, for he calls Luther and his wife "a couple of arch aliens." This is a hard saying, for all the Bible heroes and heroines were aliens.

The action of the House of Commons with regard to Conscientious Objectors is a fresh proof of how dangerous it is to do things with a total disregard of logic or common sense. When the question was first raised, we pointed out what we considered the common sense of the situation. If the State had a right to force any of the community into the Army, it had a right to force all. And when the principle of compulsion was adopted, it should have been adopted for all. This would have left the man with a conscientious objection free to make his protest in his own way and on his own responsibility. It would also have prevented any abuse of the principle. The man who objected to military service would have done so, as has been done in France and elsewhere. He would have counted the cost and paid the price, and would have deserved the respect due to such conduct. But when the State made the plea of conscientious objection a legal one, it acted illogically, and when it punished men for claiming a right which the State itself conferred, it added injustice to folly.

Now the House of Commons has decided to go further, and invent a new punishment—the disfranchisement of the Conscientious Objector—for an old offence. And that is a principle absolutely foreign to English law and, to what used to be, British ideas of freedom. At law, offenders can only be punished according to the law as it exists at the time the

offence is committed. To invent a new punishment, unknown to the offender at the time, and only introduced a long time after, is quite indefensible. It is not often we find ourselves in agreement with Lord Hugh Cecil, but we are in accord with the fine protest made by him in the House of Commons. And the reply of Mr. Bonar Law made the matter worse. To say, as he did, that the State must consider itself first, makes one open one's eyes. As Lord Hugh Cecil pointed out, this is the very charge we bring against Germany—that it believes the State has the right to override all ethical and other considerations in considering its own welfare. It is absurd and dangerous to argue that these few thousand Conscientious Objectors are a danger to the State. It was exactly upon that ground that freethinking opinions were for so long harried and Freethinkers oppressed. It is a dangerous principle to admit, and one never knows where its application will end. It is the objector to military service to-day; it may well be someone else to-morrow. Given a strong religious party in power, they could apply it to any heretical opinion it wished to punish.

The *Church Times* defends the disfranchising of the Conscientious Objector on the ground that "It is a sound principle that the claim to the rights of citizenship must be supported by the exercise of the duties of citizenship." An excellent principle; but it has nothing whatever to do with this issue. For here the State legalized the position of the genuine Conscientious Objector. It gave him the right to withdraw from military service. And having given him a right, on what ground can anyone justify punishing him for its exercise? And both the *Church Times* and the Government overlook the fact that if the Conscientious Objector is not allowed to vote, he cannot be prevented influencing the votes of others. That is, unless he is shot out of hand. But perhaps that is to come.

Dr. Fort Newton is undergoing an interesting process of evolution. He is becoming more and more the victim of a vague, unintelligent, and well-nigh unintelligible mysticism. While ostentatiously opposed to dogmas and dogmatism, he yet displays the dogmatic spirit, and, like all his brethren, lays down dogmas of his own, which are as irrational as any found in the most orthodox system of theologians. For example, in a recent sermon, speaking of Jesus, he says: "Into that world where we are free from the tyranny of time he seeks to lead us, adding a new dimension to our lives." Whether time be a tyrant or not, there is no possibility of getting free from it, except by ceasing to live. Even Dr. Newton himself is by no means independent of it.

The Rev. Dr. Jowett, minister-elect of Westminster Chapel, paints a beautifully alluring picture of the Church in the *Christian World* for November 22. She is the repairer of breaches and restorer of broken roads. She is placed in a disjointed world to set it right. Ideally, she is the most glorious institution known to history. Practically, however, the Church is the biggest swindle conceivable—the author of breaches and the breaker-up of roads. Instead of uniting people in the bond of peace and love, she divides them into a thousand hostile factions. And yet Dr. Jowett disdainfully ignores the reality and hugs the seductive but empty dream, in which he has visions of the day when, as a result of the Church's work of repair and restoration, "all strife shall be over, when there shall be no more breaches in human fellowship, when men shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks, and when they shall not learn war any more." Meantime, Holy Church is ardently worshipping and faithfully serving the God of War, and is beating all available material into weapons of destruction.

Sir Arthur Yapp, speaking at Glasgow, said that a Y.M.C.A. hut had been started at Gaza, and another would be shortly erected at Jerusalem. It looks as if the Y.M.C.A. intended to introduce religion to the Holy Land.

A man asked the other day, "What would Jesus do if he lived to-day?" Then he gave a list of reactionary deeds

which he was sure Jesus would perform were he with us now. For example, he would abolish the liquor traffic, close all places of amusement, restore the Sabbath to its holy uses, and so on. That is, Jesus would be a bigot, and do what this man would do if he had the power. Probably Jesus never lived at all; but as an imaginary character he can conveniently be held responsible for all the follies and absurdities that ever enter the heart of man.

The slump in Christianity is, as we have often pointed out, world wide. A correspondent sends us a cutting from the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* of October 10, which reports a discussion at one of the Church Synods on the reason "why so many male members seldom attend Church service," and why so many children of Church members are finally "lost." There was a lengthy discussion, and the Rev. W. H. Lillie brought forward a number of reasons, but hit the nail on the head in the first: "The advance of education so that the parson has not the same authority." We congratulate Mr. Lillie on having had the courage to say what all the clergy must know. And the only real remedy is for the clergy to stop this advance or to control it.

The clergy are continually asserting that the world-war is helping the cause of religion, but there is little proof of this. The Rev. C. Sharp, of Byfleet, Surrey, declares that "more money is spent on golf balls than is collected in the churches for foreign missions."

"Many people are too much inclined to take a gloomy view of things," says the Bishop of Willesden. It is hardly surprising that worshippers of the Man of Sorrows should be gloomy.

"People who talk of the failure of the Church do not know what they are talking about," declares the Bishop of London. Unfortunately, these poor folk do not get £10,000 yearly from the Church.

With the sanction of the Austrian Government, the Jewish rabbis pronounced the rabbinical curse against food usury. In this country the clergy leave ordinary people to do the cursing.

The anxiety of pious folk to provide huts for the use of soldiers is not entirely humanitarian. The Church Army is appealing for devotional huts and small chapels in connection with the huts.

We hope we shall not be accused of trenching on a political issue if we call attention to the action of the Government in censoring all pamphlets dealing with peace and war. The question of freedom of publication cannot be a political issue, even though it be raised in connection with a political question. We have nothing to say against compelling the names of publishers of all pamphlets to be printed; that strikes us as a sensible regulation. Nor do we say anything against anyone being prosecuted who publishes a treasonable pamphlet. If a man breaks a law, he must be prepared for the consequences. But a regulation which demands that all publications dealing with so vital a question as war or peace shall be submitted to a censor, who cannot be legally called to account for his action, is a practice altogether foreign to British traditions. And the *Freethinker* would be false to its traditions if it did not raise a protest against this. We believe the freedom of publication to be the most important thing we possess, and one can faintly imagine what men like Carlile or Bradlaugh, both of whom fought Government after Government in defence of the freedom of publication, would have said to this proposed regulation. It means, in practice, that only an opinion which commends itself to the authorities will be allowed. And Freethinkers, above all, have most cause to be alarmed about legislation of this character. We are glad to see that an attempt is to be made in the House of Commons to rescind the resolution. If an opinion is punishable it should at least be punished in open court after open trial.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.
December 2, South Shields; December 9, Glasgow.

To Correspondents.

J. & E. PUGH.—We feel quite sure from your letter that you will not let slip any opportunity of helping the *Freethinker*, and we appreciate very much the tone of your letter.

P. A.—Glad to learn that you found our advice so helpful, and the course of action recommended successful.

W. MAURICE.—Certainly, the existence of suffering as a result of earthquakes, etc., can be attributed to neither malignity nor folly—unless it be the malignity or folly of the "Divine Ruler." And we think it would puzzle anyone to find much educational value in an earthquake.

S. OWEN.—We have a rod in pickle for that particular piece of folly which will be applied in due time.

SEEKER AFTER TRUTH.—Thanks. Mr. Humphries may reply, but we doubt it.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—J. Blackhall, (2nd sub.), 2s. 6d.; J. & E. Pugh, 5s.; D. Seddon, 10s.; T. Fisher, 10s.; Mr. and Mrs. T. Love, 10s.; Vivian Phelps, £1 1s.; James T. Watkins, Jun., 2s. 6d.

S. AVES.—(1) A most exhaustive treatise on the subject is *Criminality and Economic Conditions*, by W. A. Bonger (Heinemann, 21s.). You will find therein the views of most leading writers on the topic. (2) Macniven's *Community, a Sociological Study* (Macmillan, 12s. net) will give you what you need on the other topics. It is a sound piece of writing.

F. BETTS.—Thanks for good wishes. Shall appear.

C. M. HOLDEN.—Certainly you might start a Branch of the N. S. S. at Kingston-on-Thames. Shall be pleased to give any help possible.

T. W. HAUGHTON.—See Mr. Phillpott's letter in another column. We do not claim to write without bias; we hardly think such a thing is possible. The main point seems to us whether one's bias is justifiable or not. And there are surely certain broad social issues on which comments in a paper such as the *Freethinker* are advisable and useful. And when these comments are made, we expect disagreement with some. The basis of genuine Freethought is not so much agreement as toleration of disagreement.

We regret that, by an error of transcription, the name of Mr. Cairney, the mover of the resolution at Mr. Lloyd's Glasgow meeting, reported in "Sugar Plums" a fortnight ago, should have been printed "Pairney."

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.

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

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

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

On Tyneside, South Shields is keeping the Freethought flag flying, and to-day (Sunday, December 2) in the Victoria Hall, Fowlers Street (near the Municipal Buildings—Ogle Terrace tram stop). Mr. Cohen is announced to lecture at 3—"The Cradle, the Altar, and the Grave"; and at 6.30 (music at 6) "Christianity Before and After the War." Everything possible locally is being done to make the meetings a thorough success, and it is fully anticipated that the innovation of an afternoon gathering will afford outsiders in

the district a better opportunity of hearing Mr. Cohen while he is on the North-Eastern circuit.

The campaign at Nuneaton opened well on Sunday last with two lectures from Mr. Cohen. Both meetings were well attended, the audience behaved in a most admirable manner, and a number of membership forms were signed in order to form a Branch of the N. S. S. in the town. Mr. Wilks in the afternoon, and Mrs. King in the evening, presided over the meetings with tact and good humour, and a little music and a couple of solos kept the audience interested until the lecture commenced. Visitors were present from Rugby, Coventry, and other places. This was the first time Freethought meetings had been held in Nuneaton, and we wish the new Branch every success.

From the New York *Truthseeker* :—

Headed by Robert Underwood Johnson, the poets of America have been organized to furnish an ambulance service for Italy, each ambulance to be given in honour and memory of an American poet. Mr. F. F. Ayer, a New York Agnostic, makes Ingersoll his choice, and writes the following letter :

"DEAR MR. JOHNSON: Your kind letter which invites me to describe my Ambulance in Italy to the memory of some American Poet who is past and gone, is very welcome. I shall be only too glad to do so, if you will allow me to inscribe it

To the Memory of
ROBERT G. INGERSOLL,

one of our imperial poets, our poet of freedom. No other tongue or pen so mightily and songfully poured the strains of that very Liberty and Democracy for which we are spilling souls and sovereigns. In the presence of such a monarch of the lyre, such an adjutant of humanity, my choice and conscience will not allow me to volunteer any second nomination. Sincerely yours.—F. F. AYER."

There can, of course, be no doubt that this offer will be gladly accepted by the poets' organization, and that Mr. Ayer's ambulance, inscribed to the memory of Robert G. Ingersoll, will be among the one hundred sent to Italy. The donation that pays for the ambulance is \$2,000.

The ambulance may relieve the sufferings of the soldiers; it will certainly add to those of the chaplains.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner lectures this evening (December 2) in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham, on "Belief, Make-belief, and Unbelief." We hope there will be a good rally of Birmingham Freethinkers and others.

Miss Kough lectures this evening for the Kingston Humanitarian Society, Fife Hall, Fife Road, Kingston-on-Thames, at 3 o'clock. Her subject is "Freethought, Woman, and War." Local Freethinkers will please note.

We are near the season when Freethinkers, along with other people, will be looking round for suitable gift-books for their young friends. *Not Only Men*, by Mr. George Bedborough (Garden City Press, Letchworth, 3s. 6d.), seems well designed for this purpose. The work is made up of eighteen stories, chiefly written round the War, dealing with the faithfulness of the dog, the horse, and all inculcating the lesson of kindness to the animal world. The spirit of the book is well set out in the following from the preface :—

We do not need to go far for our lessons of humanity..... To those of military age you may find it necessary to explain, with a breaking heart and through tears, that their duty is to enter the fray and fight in wars which never ought to be. But what will you say to the very young, to those who have to live with their neighbours after the War is ended? The War cannot last for ever. We are right to face the problems it brings, but the young who cannot help in the fight might at this time learn some truths which will make wars less frequent when they are men and women. The seed sown now, watered indeed with many tears, may yet save mankind when the harvest of ideas ripen.

This seems to us to strike a note that is sadly wanting in much of the writing of to-day.

A Vision of God.

I KNOW not how, but I was borne in an instant of time through the infinite space of "chaos and old night" up to the battlements of Heaven. They loomed above me higher than a dozen Alps piled one above the other, almost beyond the bounds of visibility, black, and gloomy, and forbidding. Over the lofty crenelated top of the walls poured streams of black vapour, lighted occasionally by lurid beams of blood-red fire and flashes of lightning. Niagara Falls, rain-clouds from the Atlantic borne by western gales, "war-clouds rolling dun," masses of mist rolling up mountain-valleys, all these are feeble comparisons with the oceans of vaporous matter that came spume-like from the inside of the Celestial City.

Almost unknowingly I found myself on the inner side of the great walls, within the sacred precincts of Heaven itself. I looked about apprehensively, but nothing was yet to be seen. Behind me loomed the immense walls, and in every other direction my gaze was closed by the vapours I had seen issuing over the battlements. Gray and black, heavy and slow-moving, impenetrable to the sight, oppressive so as to be felt as a tangible weight, the surging fog heaved round like ocean stirred to its depths by a hurricane. The beams of blood-red light glared intermittently, and lightnings flashed fitfully. I heard noises—thunders and rumblings, deep calling unto deep, the tumult of many waters upon rocky shores, fearful sounds comparable to nothing on earth. The lights and noises seemed at once far off and near, as if proceeding from immeasurable distances, and yet so tremendous that I stood within the confines of their birthplace.

Nervously expectant and trembling I stood and gazed with straining eyes. The red light diminished, the lightnings played but faintly, the uproar lessened, and the density of the circumambient vapour reduced. I became aware that before me a great dark object was emerging from its wrappings of black and gray. I could distinguish something pyramid-shaped revealing itself through the haze. All sounds ended, and deathly silence followed. The scarlet light ceased to gleam, and the lightnings flashed no longer. The dark towering shape took form as the masses of opaque atmosphere thinned and cleared. The last lingering wisps of gray lifted, and everything was revealed to my astonished sight.

All distances seemed alike. Near and far were equally distinct. Before me stretched a boundless plain, occupied by one feature. Between it and I lay an immense space, yet every detail of it was visible, cameo cut in its exactness. A huge platform of stone, black, but resembling granite, rose in seven step-like tiers. Centreing the top level stood a great throne of burnished brass.

I had little time for wondering at the massiveness and craftsmanship of platform and throne, for the figure seated thereon held me spellbound. It had the form of a man, yet of such colossal size and strength that no man or earth has ever been his equal, nor the giants of myth and legend. His legs, knotted with cable-like muscles, rivalled oak trunks in their gnarled massiveness. His feet were planted firmly on heaps of particoloured objects faintly resembling human bodies. Looking again I saw that they were the souls of those who had been great potentates on earth. His body was hideous in its gigantesque muscularity, fold upon fold of thews and sinews clothing him like a garment. His arms, vibrant with coarse energy like the legs of a war-horse, lay along the brazen arm-rests of the throne. His hands, huge out of all proportion, terminated in fingers and nails curved like the claws of a carnivorous bird,

Most awful of all was the head. Carried on a neck strong as a tower, dew-lapped like a bull, this Deity's head typified all his assembled qualities of strength, ferocity, cruelty, and lust. The skull was bald. Two ridges ran down to the low forehead nearly reaching the eyes. The eyes protruded, and shone dimly like suppressed furnaces, or as if a volcano heaved and struggled to burst through their sockets. The short upturned nose had wide nostrils which drew in all scents and savours, good or ill. Big pointed ears reached to the top of the head, the jaws were square and wider than the forehead, and the thin red lips set like a vice. The colour of this ultra-man was gray, with scarlet under the hands and feet. Leaning against the right hand side of the throne stood a great two-edged sword glittering like burnished silver, and by it a large bowl half-full of blood.

The plain seemed to move, and I wrenched my shuddering gaze from the horrible form, and became aware that the boundless expanse was completely covered with human shapes, all in the attitude of abject adoration, foreheads bowed to the ground. The prostrate myriads raised themselves together, leaned towards their seated monarch, and lifting their naked skeleton arms chanted hoarsely (and their voices were as the rushing of mighty winds)—"Great is our God, for He is God of War!" Their God raised his hand, and there was silence in Heaven. Faintly, as having come through immensity of space, were heard the sounds of earth. Priests chanted praises of Him who fought for right; preachers called upon him to strike for his chosen people; princes and subjects, great and small, wise and simple of every nation, and tongue and kindred could be heard praying and beseeching the Lord of Hosts to reveal himself; orators and poets proclaimed the infinite mercy and wisdom of Him who was on the side of truth and justice. The seated Deity stirred slightly, and his face assumed a look of triumphant but hideous glee; an evil distortion of the already loathsome ugliness. Then the noises of earth were wavering and confused, mingled cries of anger and agony, remorse and anguish, battle-shouts, yells of revenge, and wails of despair, groans of dying men, and the roar of millions in deadly combat. Through it all God's face took on an expression of sardonic and contemptuous satisfaction. Again the myriads of souls raised themselves and cried with one voice: "Great is our God, for He is a God of War!" And God nodded.

Then silence reigned again in heaven, and the sounds of the world were heard once more. Sorrowing of widows and orphans, desperation of beleaguered cities, distressed mariners on sinking ships, hunger-vibrant plaints of starving famine-stricken multitudes, death rattles of thousands, to these God sat and listened as a man would to sublimest music, whilst his nostrils dilated at the smell of blood, and his eyes glowed, like fire in deep caverns, at the scenes of slaughter and destruction. Here the adorant millions raised their psalm of praise: "God is our God, for He is God of War!" at which he nodded with grim and frightful graciousness.

Now the sounds of earth were confused and fainter. The praise and appeals for victory ceased. Instead were shrieks of doubt and uncertainty, oaths and cursings, men reviling God and themselves, despairing appeals, timid challengings and rejections of faith. Occasionally through this babel of discords were audible prayers for peace and entreaties for mercy. God's eye blazed like furnaces stirred for the melting of hardest steel, his hitherto set lips parted, and he ground together teeth resembling the whited sepulchres of man,

with a noise akin to the grinding of pebbles on the beach. Under his gray blood-spattered skin the muscles worked like the rolling of ocean billows, and he reached a claw-like hand for his sword. With one accord his worshippers chanted louder and longer, and many times repeated: "Great is our God, for He is God of War!" The indignant Deity sank back on his throne, his stiffened limbs relaxed, and the malicious anger faded from his features. Again the sickening odour of human blood floated up, and he drank it in as it were incense. The cavernous jaws opened in a prodigious yawn which shook his whole frame, and made the kneeling millions tremble. He slowly raised one great claw-like hand to support his heavy head, stared dully round upon his sycophants with fast closing eyes, the lips fell into a hideous grin, and God slept as his servile wretches murmured softly: "Great is our God, for He is God of War!" whilst the terrestrial globe weltered and agonized in battle and bloodshed. Then the mountains of vapour rolled over all again, and I saw no more.

A. R. WILLIAMS.

The Everlasting Hills.

III.

(Continued from p. 741.)

As our planet's integument cooled and solidified various portions hardened sooner than others. These areas formed buttresses destined to sustain the pressure brought against them by later movements of the earth's less stable parts. Professor Suess has termed these more stable regions "Horsts," a designation which has been adopted by British scientists as we possess no English equivalent. There are numerous reasons for thinking that during untold ages our globe has undergone a process of gradual contraction. Some parts have subsided, become folded, and been subjected to greater stress, strain, and fracture than others. Those regions which first assumed the solid state were least influenced by outside pressure; they sank comparatively little, and formed the great plains or "horsts" of the earth's exterior.

When the spectator surveys the immense mountain ranges, he is quite naturally inclined to the view that these vast accumulations of rocks represent those aspects of the planet's surface which have most persistently resisted the atmospheric and fluvial forces which have transported their softer materials along the rivers to the sea. Composed as they are of adamantine rock, they have shown themselves more successful in withstanding assault. Therefore it might plausibly be contended that our elevated areas are the remnants of even mightier mountains which towered when the world was young. In this opinion there is more than an element of truth, for many of our mountains have been greatly reduced by the wear and tear of time. But the established truth remains that the loftier hills rise in solemn grandeur high above the surrounding country, not only because they are built of harder material, but because during immense geological periods they have been gradually upheaved many thousands of feet above the ocean's level. All our chalk formations, thousands of feet thick, were slowly laid down at the bottom of ancient seas. Fossils of marine organisms are common in those deposits which occasionally form part of huge mountain ranges. For instance, the fossilized remains of sea animals have been discovered in the Alps at an altitude of 10,000 feet. They have been found at a greater elevation in the Rocky Mountains, while similar fossils have been unearthed in the Himalayas at the immense height of 16,500 feet.

Geologists are agreed that all the enormous layers of stratified rocks distributed throughout the earth were gently deposited on the bed of some large lake or sea. These aqueous deposits or sediments are invariably disposed in layers termed "strata" which are usually arranged in the form of horizontal layers. It is noteworthy that strata are frequently encountered, particularly in the mountains, which clearly indicate that they have been pushed out of their original position. In the hills, the once horizontal strata slope or dip slightly or deeply, and may even stand upright, thus compelling the conclusion that they have been driven upwards, or twisted and squeezed into their present position by agencies which have operated since the strata were first laid down. Lord Avebury has well expressed the wonder with which even the scientist notes these phenomena. "These wonderful contortions and fractures," he remarks,—

give in the first place the impression of sudden and catastrophic changes; and in the second place it is difficult to believe our own eyes, as it seems almost impossible that solid rocks could be bent without breaking. No doubt, however, the process was very slow. If we take a stick of sealing-wax and bend it quickly it will at once snap, but if the pressure is applied very slowly it may be bent almost to a circle. Again, it must be remembered that the strata which were folded were covered by others, and in many cases were at a great depth. The bending may also have been facilitated by heat and moisture.—(*Scenery of England*, pp. 224, 225).

Not only have elevations and depressions formed a constant feature of the earth's past history but such changes are still in progress. As Lyell pointed out in his immortal *Principles of Geology*, the land environing the Gulf of Bothnia is steadily rising. About a century and a half since, the attention of Celsius, the astronomer, was drawn to this fact, and as a result of his inquiries he arrived at the erroneous conclusion that the waters of the Baltic were changing their level. It is now demonstrable that the ocean level is fairly uniform all over the earth, and the discovery that towns once situated on the coast are now far inland finds its true explanation in the circumstance that the land is rising at the rate of over three feet each century. Later researches prove that nearly all parts of Scandinavia are ascending above the sea. Nor is this emergence uniform, for while the northern region of the Gulf of Bothnia is moving upward at the rate of more than five feet per century, the area adjoining the Aland Isles rises in the same period at the rate of three-and-a-quarter feet only. Southwards the movement is still less, while some parts of the peninsula are stationary. But more surprising still is the discovery that the most southern areas of Scandinavia are subsiding. Proof of this is furnished by the forests which have become submerged, as well as by the encroachments of the waves which now cover the sites of old coast-towns and village streets.

The ascent of the chief part of the peninsula has been in operation for a prolonged period, even if we assume that the rate of its upheaval has been more rapid in the past, because layers of sea-shells of living species are met with at heights of 650 feet above sea level. Again:—

Great dead branches of a certain pink coral, found in the sea at a depth of over 150 to 300 fathoms, are now seen in water only 10 or 15 fathoms deep. It must have been killed as it was brought up into the upper and warmer layers of water.

Further striking testimony is afforded by the pine forests on the hill slopes, for these are slowly being uplifted towards the snow-line, and are dying by degrees in their colder habitat. Moreover, extensive woodland

fringes consist entirely of dead pines, many of which have been defunct for centuries. The Baltic was once in wide and direct communication with the salt waters of the North Sea, and the great lakes of Southern Sweden were at that time the deepest depressions of this channel. It is practically certain that the numerous wide sheets of water which occupy the granite basins of Finland are the shrunken remains of a stretch of sea which once joined the waters of the Baltic with those of the Arctic Ocean. Here, also, the land has been raised far above the sea, while much beyond the reach of contemporary tides, ancient sea-beaches along the Scottish, Scandinavian, and other coasts, stand as unimpeachable witnesses of the recession of the ocean.

Between the reaches of high and low tide, the waves are busily engaged in the production of shingle and sand; depositing them on the beach; interspersing them with the shells and skeletons of marine animals, and remains of plants; now massing them in heaps, and now washing them away. A beach is in this manner transformed into a terrace. When the shore rises fast enough to lift these beach fragments beyond the reach of the waves, they form a flat terrace, or what is termed a "raised beach." The earlier high-water mark is no longer invaded by the sea; moisture-loving vegetation appears in the caverns, and the old beach provides an excellent site for hamlets, villages, and arable and pasture lands. Then the retreating waves sculpture a new beach seawards.

On the shores of Scotland, several of these terraced beaches may be seen rising in succession at heights ranging from twenty to seventy-five feet above the present high-water limit. Each of these abandoned beaches represents an earlier lower level at which the beach was swept by the sea, and the intervening spaces signify the successive elevations of the shore. Each terrace was constructed during a resting interval in the ascent, for in the stationary periods the waves were able to form terraces, whereas, during the constant upward movements, they were interrupted from their work. We thus realize that the elevation of the land was here suspended by periods of rest.

Innumerable evidences of the rise of the Scottish coast-line exist. The ancient Roman port of Alaterna—Cramond—now lies at a considerable distance from the sea. The celebrated wall of Antoninus, which in Roman times bridged the land from shore to shore, now terminates some twenty-six feet beyond the high-tide mark. Once more, the tides rose several feet above their present high level 2,000 years ago in the estuary of the Clyde. Kindred phenomena occur in England, notably on our south-western coasts, while on the slopes of the hilly fiords of Norway raised beaches abound. Some of these terraces stand more than 600 feet above the level of the sea, while at a distance of fifty miles inland, even more elevated beaches, once fashioned by the waves of the sea, arrest the attention. Nova Zembla, Northern Greenland, Spitzbergen, and a range of coast extending for 600 miles in Siberia, have all participated in this upward movement. The Andes of the Pacific Coast in South America have risen very appreciably during recent times. Raised beaches are found near the Chilean Andes at a height of 1,000 feet, while in the vicinity of Valparaiso they are encountered at a height of 1,300 feet above the sea.

It is more than surmised that, while the western region of South America is being raised up, important parts of its eastern coasts are sinking. This see-saw movement is also in action in North America; for while portions of the eastern coast are subsiding slowly, some regions in Labrador are rising. It is estimated that New Jersey

is being depressed at the rate of a couple of feet each century.

Upward, and occasionally downward, movements of the earth are apt to be associated with earthquakes. For instance, after the devastating earthquake in Chili in 1835, the country near the Bay of Concepcion was raised four or five feet. The most cursory examination of the rocks furnishes unmistakable evidence of their subjection to tremendous stress and strain. Rock fractures range from a few inches up to thousands of feet, and the comparatively sudden shocks known as earthquakes are similar in character to those which cause the gradual and almost imperceptible upheaval of a mountain mass. Our globe is a cooling body which shrinks as it cools, and the crushing and folding of its strata necessarily follow. Composed of substances of unequal strength, certain parts of the planet's crust yield more easily than others, and as the rocks readjust themselves, their pressure inevitably urges the earth's surface into a series of wrinkles like those on the skin of a dried fruit. In other words, the globe's internal energies have slowly fashioned those irregularities of its surface which appear to us as the giant mountain ranges of the world.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be continued.)

A Rich New World.

THE most striking characteristics of the world to-day are its poverty of thought, its shabby religion, and its lack of material enjoyment. Mankind is about as developed as a ten day old puppy. A puppy gets its eyes open in nine days, so that on the tenth day it must be just beginning to have a faint notion of the place in which it finds itself. Just in the same way, we now have a faint notion of what it means really to live. Until one hundred years ago men were practically asleep. Up to then no great progress had been made in labour-saving machinery, and telegraphy and aeronautics were absolutely undreamt of. The poets and prophets of the past had a dim notion of a glorious future, but it was very dim, because nothing was then known, or even suspected, of what could be done with machinery. How could they who lived under the tyranny of religious and economic superstition dream of the possibilities of the liberated mind, as we can who live in a land where thought and speech are beginning to be free? We are now slowly coming to understand that mankind is to be made happy by having things and not by doing without them; that righteousness is to come by general wealth and not by the superabundant wealth of a few idlers among millions of poverty-stricken workers condemned to hopeless drudgery.

That human desires are not only righteous, but almost endless, and that, through co-operation, human power to gratify those desires is almost boundless. It is, indeed, hard to conceive any limit to the production of wealth when we once grasp the idea that the right way to live is to spend and not to save. All the silly talk about thrift being the greatest of virtues is based on the fallacy that interest on money lent is the fair reward of the saver for his abstinence, whereas it is really due to the monopoly of banking, and the superstition that gold is the only reliable basis for a paper currency. Besides, it is impossible to save wealth, because the moment any form of wealth is produced it must be consumed. Man may consume it if he will, but if not Nature will do it for him—this economic law holds good from a loaf of bread to a Tower Bridge.

You can save money (claims to wealth), but you cannot save wealth, and any general attempt to do so would lead to general stagnation of trade and widespread misery.

There is practically no limit to our co-operative power to make the things we ought all to have, if we can get rid of the political and social bars which our ignorant ancestors set up, and we stupidly perpetuate, to prevent us from supplying our wants.

Just imagine how wealth would be increased if all the vacant land were thrown freely open for the workers to use. Cannot one see what a tremendous bar to general wealth is the unjust privilege now given to idle landlords to keep the workers in constant subjection, and take from them a large part of their just wages? The land must be nationalized, and all rents would then go into the public treasury, and be used for the benefit of the workers.

But this is by no means all that is necessary. The workers must also be relieved of all restrictions on the exchange of their wealth after they have produced it. And as money is the tool of exchange, and consists to-day of cheques and currency notes (silver and bronze coins are merely tokens used in trifling exchanges), the manufacture and sale of these tools must be taken out of the hands of the present ring of private banks which now control the currency and levy an enormous tribute from the workers in the form of interest.

The size of this tribute is well shown by the present War Loan now amounting to £4,000 millions, involving an annual payment by the workers of £200 millions, the great bulk of which goes in satisfaction of the preposterous claims of a few thousands of over-rich investors, who, as such, have done nothing and contributed nothing towards carrying on the War. And this fictitious War Debt is steadily increasing so that if the War lasts another two years, it will probably amount to £8,000 millions, bearing interest at the rate of £400 millions annually, every penny of which must be produced by the workers before they can claim anything of their just wages. Now, the whole mechanism of exchange consists of nothing but bookkeeping, and the printing of the cheques and currency notes, by means of which credit is passed from hand to hand, so that the actual labour cost of thus financing the War should not have exceeded five million pounds annually, and ceased altogether when the War was over. Yet it has been made to swallow up the cost of all the battleships, and guns, and aeroplanes, and munitions, and food, and clothing several times over, and will continue to hang like a millstone round the necks of the workers for many years to come!

Thus you see that nationalizing the land will be of little use unless we also have a State Bank, owned and controlled by the workers for the benefit of the workers, and supplying them with a cheap and abundant paper currency based on their own productive power, as all money, which is merely a claim to wealth, manifestly should be. No gold whatever has been used in making our home exchanges since the Currency Notes were forced into use by the failure of the gold-based banks at the first breath of war, and is, therefore, plainly unnecessary.

That all the poverty which disgraces us is due to our own artificial arrangements of society is manifest when we see that not a single wild animal, if left alone by man, cannot make a comfortable living and have plenty of time besides for play and love making and rest. Yet we men have now learned to harness the forces of Nature—steam and electricity—and make them do our bidding, and should, therefore, be able to have more enjoyment and rest than any wild animal. There is really no reason why each worker in a co-operative commonwealth should not have an income of £1,000 a year at pre-war prices. Think of the power that is running to waste all the time in our rivers, tides, and waterfalls, all of which might, and should be, utilized for producing

electricity to drive our trains, cook our food, and warm our houses. Think again of the great advance in aeronautics forced on by the War, so that we may soon expect to have a regular postal service carried on through the air at three times the speed of our present service. None of these great inventions have hitherto been of any benefit to the vast majority of the workers, simply because their low wages have not allowed them to derive any advantage from them, while the idle rich have so much unearned wealth that they are quite unable to spend it, and are driven into every kind of pernicious excitement to help them to get some spice into their useless lives.

Yes, the coming co-operative commonwealth will make us all truly rich beyond the dreams of the dreamers. And when we all have a feeling of perfect security about the future because we know that no man can shut off our plentiful livelihood, then there will be no intellectual cowards. Just think what a rich world of thought that will be in which the professors will say to their pupils: "Young men and women, it is your first duty to doubt everything that comes from someone else's authority. Your first duty is to examine everything for yourselves, and to use your own reason in coming to any conclusion. Your highest honour should be to have found a new line of thought, and worked it out for the benefit of both yourself and your co-workers, whose interests are interdependent. On the subject before us this is what I think, but I wish you to try to prove that I am mistaken, and shall be far more pleased if you can show that I am wrong than right." What a lovely world that would be! What a philosophy we should then get, and what a religion!

How can we in this poverty-stricken world, full of constant anxiety about the provision of a bare livelihood, find out anything worthy of reverence? Just think of the wretched stuff that is taught in our Churches to-day—where they have dolls and candles, and where the clergy dress themselves up in fancy costumes to make people believe that they are different from ordinary human beings—stuff that makes righteousness to consist in tamely submitting to any vile conditions of life as the will of God, and in believing a lot of impossible things in order to escape being eternally burned alive.

But when we are all rich we shall have time to think and explore, and thus gain an adequate conception of the great universe of which we are a part. Just as there is no limit to what we can produce in material things, so also, when our minds are liberated from the drudgery of to-day, shall we penetrate into regions of mentality of which our greatest thinkers now give us but dim and suggestive hints.

Now, this great War has broken down many old prejudices and false beliefs, among which none are more powerful for evil than the superstition that gold is a necessary factor in the mechanics of exchange. The workers, in striking against their organizers and superintendents, have been "barking up the wrong tree."

Let them now unite in demanding a State Bank, as described by Mr. Arthur Kitson in his books, *Trade Fallacies* and *A Fraudulent Standard*, just published by Messrs. King & Son, and the Nationalization of the Land, because these two things are the keys to economic freedom, finding its true expression in a voluntary Co-operative Commonwealth.

Ring out the false, ring in the true;
Ring out a slowly dying cause,
And ancient forms of party strife.
Ring in the nobler modes of life,
With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Correspondence.

MEN, MONEY, AND THE WAR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—It was only because Mr. Thorn did appear to deny the justice of the necessity of the State to receive financial support in the prosecution of a just War, that I pointed out the error of so doing. I rejoice to know that he did not mean any such thing, but cannot admit his words did not imply it. For the rest, of course, we are all with him to a man.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

The Blank Wall.

III.

THE conception that the history of man is the record of a continuous Progress, and that each year added to the official almanac is a year's improvement upon the one that has passed, is a fallacy that continues to obsess the average brain.

But does not the realization that the trend of evolution is unmistakably upon a downward line prove the inability of the modern brain to perceive a reality as insistent as the fact of scientific war, or the increasing struggle for existence?

That the great majority of people should conceive this process of insidious corruption as "Progress" is sufficiently indicative of the real position. The People of Civilization are "progressing" downwards, believing it to be the opposite direction! Life is like the famous pyramid—inverted—and tottering upon its point! The brain of humanity has inverted itself without being conscious of what has happened!

At the present time it is almost impossible to print ordinary common sense. Vicious newspapers, whose sole object is to increase capital through the War, are praised to the utmost by every dissolute and degenerate mind, while those who attempt to disseminate sanity and idealism, are regarded as being guilty of the most intolerable kind of reactionary stupidity and maliciousness! Great ideals, however, are being expressed through the medium of obscure and neglected individuals, as, indeed, they have always been expressed. Great men and women are in this hour crying in the wilderness which adds acres to its boundaries as the centuries pass. They cry, it seems, in vain. We can offer humanity Ideals and Truth, but it seems that we are unable to bestow the requisite mental power of understanding these precious things.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

Society News.

THE debate last Sunday on "The Transmission of Acquired Characteristics," as expected, proved extremely interesting. The subject, being one upon which Freethinkers differ, was keenly followed by those present, and many questions were asked of Mr. Wilde and Mr. Palmer, showing how stimulating the debate had been. It was gratifying to notice some new faces in the audience, and it is hoped that those who read this column will send a postcard, giving name and address, to the undersigned, or to the Head Office, for a syllabus of these debates, which we hope to continue to the end of March. Friends desiring to speak publicly on behalf of the Freethought cause, will find in these debates a good opportunity of trying their prentice hand before a sympathetic audience. No topical subject is barred. Next Sunday evening, Dr. Binnie Dunlop, the Secretary of the Malthusian League, will open on "Freethought and Neo-Malthusianism." This subject should be of special interest to our women friends, at the present time, and we hope Dr. Dunlop will find a large audience of women to greet him.—H. V. Lane, Hon. Sec., N. London Branch, 29, Burton Street, King's Cross, W.C., 1

The *Daily Mirror* says "the Prince of Wales is expected by some to be the King of Jerusalem." We imagined that Jesus Christ had that honour.

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.

KINGSTON HUMANITARIAN SOCIETY (Fife Hall, Fife Road, Kingston-on-Thames): 3, Miss K. B. Kough, "Freethought, Woman, and War."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Dr. Binnie Dunlop, M.B. (Secretary Malthusian League), "Freethought and Neo-Malthusianism." Open debate.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, S.W., near Oval Tube Station): 7, P. S. Wilde, "Gods Beginnings."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mrs. H. Bradlaugh Bonner, "Belief, Make-Belief, and Unbelief."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street): 7, R. Heughan, "Secularism and Political Action."

NEW MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Bakers' Hall, 56 Swan Street): 6.30, A. C. Rosetti, "Jottings from Astronomy."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall, Fowler Street): Chapman Cohen, 3, "The Cradle, the Altar, and the Grave"; 6.30, "Christianity Before and After the War." 6, Music.

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