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## Views and Opinions.

### The Art of Dying.

We see that a book is announced for publication under the title of *The Book of the Craft of Dying*. It is a collection of mediæval tracts, edited by a lady, with a preface by a clergyman. The work can hardly fail to be interesting, and to those acquainted with the output of a mediæval mind the title is reminiscent. It carries one back to a time when dying might well be called a "craft." For it was studied with all the care which many normally give to mastering an ordinary occupation. Nowadays, when so much attention is given, and rightly given, to the craft of living, it seems strange to think of a society in which the leaders of thought placed chief emphasis on the art of dying. Life was then valuable only as it prepared one for death and for what lay beyond. Nor was this frame of mind wholly mediæval. It was prominent less than a hundred years ago. "Prepare to meet thy God" was the burden of a deal of the theology then preached, and religious literature generally was well calculated to produce chronic melancholy in a Mark Tapley. Whatever claim Christianity may have to be called the religion of eternal life, it was certainly the religion of terrestrial death. So far as it could, it made death supreme in the human mind, and if its supremacy was never more than transient, and was finally broken, this was due to the fact that the conditions of human existence are that natural solution works on the side of the supremacy of the "will to live." The closing sorrow of the grave must give place to the dawning joy of the cradle.

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### Living on Death.

The *Artes bene Moriendi* was a well-known mediæval treatise, and its scope is well described by Mr. Lionel Cust in his *History of Engraving during the Fifteenth Century*:—

At this date the keys of knowledge, as of salvation, were entirely in the hands of the Church, and the lay public, both high and low, were, generally speaking, ignorant and illiterate. One of the secrets of the great

power exercised by the Church lay in its ability to represent the life of man as environed from the outset by legions of horrible and insidious demons, who beset his path throughout life at every stage up to his very last breath, and are eminently active and often triumphant when man's fortitude is undermined by sickness, suffering, and the prospect of dissolution. From such attacks and pitfalls only the continuous presence and protection of the Church could protect the hopeless pilgrim.

Men turned to the Church for protection against the terror of death which the Church itself taught. The poisoner did a lucrative trade in selling a doubtful remedy for his own toxic preparation. More than anything else the fear of death and hell laid the foundation of the wealth and power of the Churches. Even to-day these Churches exert the most power that keep to the older line of teaching. The two truths engraved on the face of European history is that the power of the Christian Church was rooted in death, and that it flourished in dishonour. \* \* \*

### Pagan and Christian.

And let it be noted that the intense fear of death is a product of Christian teaching. The fear of death played but a small part in the life of Greece and Rome, and none at all in the life of its best representatives. Of the Greek sculpture concerning death, Professor Mahaffy says: "They are simple pictures of the grief of parting, of the recollection of pleasant days of love and friendship, of the gloom of the unknown future. But there is no exaggeration in the picture." And throughout Roman art and letters there runs the conception of death as the necessary converse of birth. Pliny clearly puts this in the following: "Unto all the state of being often the last day is the same as it was before the first day of life; neither is there any more variation of it in either body or soul after death than there was before death." Among the uneducated people some fear of the after world did exist, and it was upon that fear Christianity rested itself in its successful appeal to ignorance as against knowledge, to blind fear against enlightenment. And Free-thinkers at least can sympathize with Lucretius, who saw the great danger and sought to guard men by pointing out the unreality of this death-bed terror.

So shalt thou feed on Death who feeds on men,  
And Death once dead, there's no more dying then.

\* \* \*

### A Mediæval Nightmare.

It was Christianity, and Christianity alone, which made death so fearsome a thing to the European mind. And society once Christianized, the uneducated could find no corrective from the more educated. The baser elements existing in the non-Christian world were seized by Christian teachers and amplified and developed. Plato had speculated in a hell of a thousand years' duration. Christianity stretched it to eternity. Plutarch and others had discredited the popular notions of a future life. Christianity reaffirmed them with all the extravagant embellishments of a diseased imagination. The Pagan teachers held death to be as normal and as natural as birth; with Christian teachers it was a penal infliction.

The Pagan *Art of Life* gave place to the Christian *Art of Death*. "How to die" took the place of "How to live," and Christian teachers lacked the perception that one could only answer the first by discovering the second. Human ingenuity exhausted itself in describing the nature of hell and the torments of the damned, and when one remembers the powers of the Church and the murderous suppression of all opposing opinion, there is small wonder that, under Christian rule, the fear of death gained a strength it had never possessed before or since.

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#### Christianity and Science.

Two causes are chiefly responsible for the changed attitude towards—perhaps one ought to say for the return of the modern mind to the Pagan point of view. The first is scientific, the second is social. In the state of universal ignorance amid which Christianity flourished, it was easy enough to believe in a literal heaven and hell, and the fear-creating stories of the Church. While the sky was a solid dome of scanty extent, the earth was the small central body of a small universe, and man himself the centre of creation, surrounded by legions of angels and devils, there was nothing essentially incongruous between them and the accepted cosmology. The growth of science broke down the harmony of centuries, and people found themselves confronted by a universe utterly at variance with Christian teaching, and in the re-establishment of an equilibrium Christianity lost heavily. Beliefs that appeared reasonable in the old world of science were glaringly absurd in the new. A new and critical spirit of investigation were evolved, and this, when applied to religious beliefs, began to make it plain that an after life was a subject upon which all were at liberty to guess, but upon which none were in a position to pronounce with certainty.

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#### The Saner View.

The development of a saner view of social life also operated powerfully to the same end. The fear of death had gained its chief strength from the conviction that happiness hereafter was dependent upon right belief here. The value of this life was expressed in terms of a life hereafter. The grave was the entrance hall to a chamber from which issued decrees that determined man's eternal welfare, and death was the summons to attend. But when the point of view was reversed, this life became more and more an end in itself; death and after death ceased to be the determining factors of conduct, and the belief in a future life gradually assumed its true character as a pure speculation grafted upon the psychology of primitive man. Sociology is the enemy of theology; science is the true solvent of superstition. The world is rapidly reaching the conclusion that this life can be made adequate as an end if we will only make it so. Life is part of Nature, and Nature is neither good nor bad. It is to each what his organization and education fits him for. To the Christian the fear of death may well be strong and ever present. To the liberated mind death brings no fear. If life has been smooth and pleasant, death is but the close of an agreeable interlude. If it has been otherwise, it can still be said:—

After life's fitful fever he sleeps well;  
Treason has done his worst; nor steel, nor poison,  
Malice domestic, foreign levy, nothing  
Can touch him further.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The advocate of what is false has every reason to make his advances stealthily and to curry favour with the world. The man who feels that he has truth on his side must step firmly. Truth is not to be dallied with.—*Goethe*.

## "The New Thinking."

SUCH is the title of a Thursday noon sermon recently delivered in the City Temple by Dr. Fort Newton, and reported in the *Christian Commonwealth* for November 28. Seeing such a novel title one naturally expected to find the discourse bristling with startlingly fresh and original ideas. The text, too, "What think ye of Christ?" lent zest to the hope that, now at last, an old subject was about to receive a perfectly unique treatment. Of course, there was no escape from the suspicion that the title must be misleading, and there is no text upon which more sermons have been founded. But one was comforted by the fact that Dr. Newton is a new man who is generally believed to have come all the way from America because he has a new message to deliver to the British public. It is but fair to admit that the address opens well with the statement that "to-day men are thinking faster, further, and more searchingly than they have thought for many a day." One distinct blessing of the War is that "out of the suffering and the breaking of hearts new thought patterns are being woven, which, by inevitable logic, will become action-patterns, and that means a new way of living in times to be." But the examples cited are scarcely convincing. No doubt the trenches are exerting a powerful influence upon the soldiers, many of whom are, doubtless, genuine heroes; but there is no evidence whatever that, when they come back to the days of peace, they will be altogether new men, animated by new ideas, nobler motives, and higher aims. Whatever Coningsby Dawson and Dr. Newton may say to the contrary, we do not believe that war has ever been, or ever will be, a regenerator of character. It is true that it often brings out the best there is in a man, but it cannot be denied that it also tends to develop the very worst qualities. We are fully aware that, speaking generally, mankind is slowly evolving from lower to higher levels of life, and that, as an inevitable consequence, a new social order will ultimately be established. By the operation of a purely natural law, we are by degrees, in spite of numerous backsets, learning the art of living by actually living.

At this point Dr. Newton declares that the same process is going on in the religious world. He says:—

Inevitably, the new thinking is finding its way into religion, and that is why things are upside down. From statistics taken not so very long ago, it was found that, in London, only about fifteen or twenty per cent. of the people attend Church or Chapel. It is much the same in America, as witness a very striking story by Kibb Turner, entitled "The Last Christian," in which we are shown the situation as it is. It portrays the slow decadence and final death of the typical "big white church" in a New England village. The last Christian, in the story, is the faithful, devoted, scholarly pastor of the church, who kept true to his creed and his vows through thirty years of ministry. But, in spite of his loyalty, he saw the church disintegrating under his hand. Young men went to college and never again returned to the fellowship. Women, whose hearts were breaking from the sorrows of life, found no comfort in the creed of the pastor, and turned to some cult for help. The pastor lived long enough to see the old church sold to a secret fraternity, and the remnant of his flock united with a neighbouring church whose minister had a proclivity to quote Browning.

That is a highly interesting and profoundly true tale, and it conclusively proves the truth of the Freethought tenet that natural knowledge of necessity undermines supernatural belief. This Dr. Newton fails to realize. The facts are as stated by the novelist, and to dispute them would be the quintessence of folly; but instead

of taking them as they are, the reverend gentleman insists upon *interpreting* them. Being *interpreted*, then, the facts do not show that "the men of to-day are indifferent to religion, as we are so often told. No, no; they are thinking about it as they have never done for years, thinking deeply, seriously, and very much to the point." Evidently Dr. Newton speaks for thousands upon thousands of people in this country, of whom he clearly knows absolutely nothing, and his statement is in consequence utterly false. Moreover, he deliberately misrepresents non-religious people by taking for granted that they are sodden masses, "dead to all high appeals." To the claims of supernatural religion, as such, they are completely indifferent; but the bulk of them display wonderful humanity, benevolence, and mildness of disposition. Dr. Newton is guilty of bearing false witness against them through ignorance and prejudice; but as a public man he has no right to speak *ex cathedra* on matters concerning which he is ignorant and biased.

His main point, however, is that "men are thinking differently about religion from what they did in days gone by." In a sense that is quite true, but not in the sense intended by the preacher. Belief in God is impossible to an ever-growing multitude of thoughtful people, with the result that religion as Divine fellowship has no meaning for them. The new thinking, in their case, is natural, scientific thinking, the thinking that confines itself to the present world and life; and for them life at its highest and best signifies life devoted to fellowship with, and service of, their fellow-beings. For Dr. Newton, however, the new thinking "is the simple but mighty Gospel of Jesus, enriched by science, illustrated by democracy, and applied by the educational method." According to the New Testament, the message of the Gospel of Jesus is that "God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on him should not perish, but have eternal life." Surely, such a Gospel cannot possibly be enriched by science, illustrated by democracy, or applied by any educational methods. To derive all the benefits in its gift, all we have to do is to believe it, or put our trust in him whose Gospel it is. On the preacher's own showing, the Gospel of Jesus, on its ethical side, is as old as the hills, containing not a single new idea. The Golden Rule, which it is said to make central, was in existence at least five hundred years before Jesus was ever heard of. The path of righteousness, to which it points, is simply the eightfold path of the Buddha. But, after all, where does the Christ come in, and what does the minister of the City Temple really think of him? We have read his sermon most carefully more than once; but we have totally failed to discover what Christ is to him. The terms he employs in speaking of him are so vague and ambiguous that it is impossible to determine whether he is a Trinitarian or a Unitarian, or in what respect Christ is the Saviour of the world. The only thing of which we are positively certain is that here we are not brought into touch with any new thinking whatsoever. Take the following:—

And Christ! Are men thinking of him in these strange and tangled days? Indeed, yes, they are thinking of him lovingly and wistfully, wondering if, after all, he is not the wisest and most practical of all the teachers of men. For most men of to-day the Christ of dogma has vanished, or is vanishing. They are not interested in the ancient debates which agitated their fathers:

Draw if thou canst the mystic line  
Severing rightly his from thine,  
Which is human, which Divine?

With these speculative mysteries they have not to do, because their problems are of another kind. What they want is to know God as he is disclosed and interpreted

in terms of our common life, and this they find in Jesus—in his growth, his manhood, his mingled joys and sorrows, his fellowship with humanity, his sufferings, his death, his victory.

The chief characteristic of that extract is its vagueness. It is true that the Christs of dogma are vanishing, but there are no others. Christ is an interpretation, and that is why there are so many different Christs. Even the Gospel Jesus is an interpretation, and that is why there are so many contradictions in the Gospels. Historical facts are conspicuous only by their absence. Dr. Newton is fully as dogmatic as Dean Wace, only in a different way; and the one dogmatism is no better founded than the other. We are never at a loss to know what the Dean means, but are never wholly certain what significations Dr. Newton attaches to his terms.

Now, the conclusion to which we are forced by an examination of the sermon under consideration is that it registers no new thinking whatever, and that religion is a theme upon which literally nothing new can be said. Usually there is in Dr. Newton's discourses a considerable amount of Humanism, but it is so interwoven with supernatural threads that its beauty is greatly marred and its ethical elements lose their value.

J. T. LLOYD.

### Through Christian Spectacles.

The miraculous has become absurd, the impossible. Gods and phantoms have been driven from the earth and sky. We are living in a natural world.—*Ingersoll*.

THE small but fierce tribe of Christian Evidence exponents have a new ally in Mr. Arthur Machen, the well-known journalist, who has published a column article in the *Evening News* dealing with Freethinkers and their attitude to religion. But Mr. Machen wears his rue with a difference. Like that placid dachshund which Mark Twain saw in the possession of a sportsman who was taking it out to hunt elephants, he lacks bitterness. He also lacks other things—the ability to murder the King's English, and the power of talking very loudly in the open air.

Nevertheless, I find myself in a rebellious humour. For there is an irritating air of dilettantism in Mr. Machen's propaganda, and a note of patronage. There is also an echo of the Oxford University manner, which has been jocosely described as the attitude of the Almighty addressing a bug. It will probably be grateful to the sentimentalists who still cling to the name of Christian; but I imagine it will irritate rather than satisfy other readers of more virile intelligence.

Mr. Machen suggests that the fault of Freethinkers, or rather their misfortune, for they are born that way, is that they lack the religious sense. The Freethinker, he tells us, resembles the unhappy folk who are "tone-deaf," and "colour-blind," and who cannot enjoy the delights of literature. "He is not able to relish a good dinner; so he finds out all kinds of reasons to prove that dinner is nonsense, and poisonous nonsense at that." Mr. Machen is "sorry" for the poor, demented Freethinker, and in the heat of his argument, "somewhat cross." "Freethought," he points out politely, "is found to some extent in all minds save in the two extremes of saints and simpletons." And, since journalists are not saints, it is terrible to reflect to which group Mr. Machen himself belongs.

Mr. Machen's simile of the dinner is beautiful and ineffectual nonsense. Freethinkers are as able to relish a good dinner as the most credulous clergyman "with good capon lined"; but they are not so simple as to mistake a menu for a banquet. The Christian menu has no correspondence with the meal that follows, and

the price charged is too high. A bird in the hand is worth any number in the bush. A slender chance of profit in the next life does not compensate for mental slavery in this life. An honest man, with a sense of human dignity, would hesitate to play fast and loose with his intellect, and accept a creed because it appeals to his selfish hopes and fears. Living by faith is an easy profession, as the clergy well know. Living on faith, however, is a precarious business. Elijah is said to have subsisted on food brought him by inspired ravens, and 50,000 parsons to-day in this country subsist on the offerings of the pious. The starving people of Europe ask God to give them their daily bread, and the answer is that they die. If there were no other indictment of Christianity, the awful sufferings of helpless women and children would condemn it everlastingly.

According to Mr. Machen, the religious sense is but a common faculty, and Christians have little reason to plume themselves as members of God's own aristocracy. The senses of beauty and wonder, and, indeed, the love of æsthetics, are not necessarily religious, but are perfectly natural. How, then, can there be anything "spiritual" in their combinations? Is it reasonable to gibe at the Freethinker as like a man "utterly incapable" of relishing the exquisite savours of *La Belle Dame Sans Merci*, and as one who prefers novelettes before Shakespeare when one remembers that Shakespeare and Keats were both Freethinkers. Mr. Machen is obsessed with a gross illusion. Christians have no monopoly of the finer feelings. It is very doubtful if the average hymn of to-day has any more claim to be considered as real literature than the usual music-hall song. And the glaring lithographs of Sacred subjects framed in so many Christian homes suggests that colour-blindness is not confined to the heterodox.

As a defender of the faith, Mr. Machen is not a great success. One of his ruses has been to misrepresent and slander heretics. The way he does this is as follows:—

But the man who is convinced that the early martyrs were designing and crafty rogues is, often for some obscure reason, anxious to proclaim his conviction to the world, whereby he becomes a burden and a bore.

This is as absurd as the story of Noah's Ark or of the adventures of Jonah and the whale. Mr. Machen, being an instructed citizen of an educated nation, should know better than that. There is always something exhilarating in the infatuation of an heroic ignoramus, but this holy simplicity of Mr. Machen's is overdone. Conceivably, on reflection, and after consultation of Paine, Renan, and Strauss, to mention no others, he will recognize that sobriety of statement is not precisely the quality in which his talents shine.

Mr. Machen is not so childlike and bland as he appears to be. He follows the beaten track of theology in talking of mysteries, which is a subterfuge to cover the retreat of a defender of the faith. Here are his words:—

The truth is that, whether we like it or not, we live, if we live well, in and by and through mysteries.

Mysteries, forsooth! And Mr. Machen has not illuminated them with his camouflage of controversy. Wishing to keep the religious instinct in mystery, or obscurity, he objects to explanations. He cannot tolerate that men should talk of these things too inquiringly. Even if the critics are right, the subject is taboo. The older theologians were definite; the modern defenders of the faith are indefinite. As man advances, God retires. With each increase of our knowledge of Nature the sphere of the "supernatural" is lessened. Presently people will find that deities and devils are but the reflections of

man's imagination and symbols of his ignorance. So religion develops, "till by broad spreading it disperse to nought."

When the Sultan of Zanzibar sent a second-hand tramp steamer to sink the British Fleet, a hearty laugh rang through the civilized world. Mr. Machen's acting the part of St. George attacking the dragon of Free-thought is equally exhilarating. "Is it reasonable," asks the amusing Mr. Machen, "to spend time in reading about Mr. Pickwick, who never existed?" Christians, it might be retorted, worship a being who never existed, and employ fifty thousand parsons to perpetuate the comedy. There is a world of difference between the Freethinker, who labours for rational progress, and the journalist, who turns Christian for half an hour, to bolster up the delusions of faith. Christians are surrounded by the waters of Rationalism, and stand a bad chance of drowning. And the matter will not be unduly prolonged because a journalist essays the part of Mrs. Partington, the courageous woman who sought to sweep back the Atlantic with a mop.

MIMNERMUS.

## The Bible and Immortality.

### THE NEW TESTAMENT SOUL AND SPIRIT.

OUR search for "eternal life" necessitates an examination of the New Testament, where we naturally expect to find it; and we *do* find something which looks like it in connection with the words life, soul, and spirit; but, as in the case of the Old Testament, we must ascertain what these words really mean. This is rendered more necessary by the confused and conflicting ideas which many Christians have upon the subject. With this object in view I will commence with the word "soul" which occurs twice in the following extract:—

Mark viii. 36, 37.—For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

In this passage the Greek word translated "soul" is *psyche*, which is said to mean "soul or life." Now, we all know what is meant by "life," though we may, perhaps, find some difficulty in defining it; but we do *not* know what is meant by "soul." This we have to discover. In the foregoing passage, then, the word *psyche* in both cases means "life," and is so translated in the Revised Version, the alternative reading "soul" being placed in the margin. Hence, in this passage, we are asked a perfectly rational question—What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his *life*? We find, also, that the word *psyche* is rendered "life" in the following passages even in the Authorised Version:—

Matt. ii. 20.—They are dead that sought the young child's *life* (*psyche*).

Matt. vi. 25.—Be not anxious for your *life* (*psyche*) what ye shall eat, &c.

Again, we find the word *psyche* used in the New Testament to designate the whole man, regardless of any soul or spirit which he might possess. Thus we read:—

Act ii. 43.—And fear came upon every *soul*.

Acts vii. 14.—All his kindred, three score and fifteen *souls*.

Rev. xvi. 3.—And every living *soul* died.

1 Peter iii. 20.—In the days of Noah.....only eight *souls* were saved.

In each of these examples the word translated "soul" is *psyche*. We are told by orthodox Christians that the soul is the "spiritual part" of man, and that, being immortal, it lives in some unknown locality after the

death of the body. Yet in the examples we have noticed so far, we find that in some cases *psyche* signifies nothing more than "life," and in others it means merely a "living person." In the last four examples the word is applied, not to an imaginary spiritual part of man, but to the whole natural body—like the Hebrew word *nephesh*.

In the expression "eternal life," however, the word used is *zoe*, even when the word "eternal" is not expressed but only implied. The following are some examples in which *zoe* appears: Matt. xviii. 9; xix. 29; Mark x. 17; Luke x. 25; xviii. 30; John iii. 36; and throughout the New Testament. The following are further examples of the use of *psyche*:—

Matt. xxii. 37.—Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy *soul* (*psyche*), and with all thy mind.

Heb. x. 39.—But we are of them that have faith unto the saving of the *soul* (*psyche*).

Rev. xx. 4.—I saw the *souls* (*psychas*) of them that had been beheaded, etc.

According to the first of these passages the heart, soul, and mind in man had all three the power to love; according to the second, the soul was something within man which it was thought desirable to "save"—his life, for instance. In the third passage the writer does not tell us what the objects which he calls "souls" really were, or what they looked like—whether they appeared to be headless bodies, the heads only, pools of blood, or phantoms.

We will now look at two Greek words, *empsychos* and *apsychos*, the first of which signifies "living, animated"; the second, "lifeless, spiritless." The prefix "em" signifies "in" or "with"; the prefix "a" denotes "not" or "without": the literal meanings of the two words are thus "with life" and "without life." From this fact we have positive proof that the original meaning of *psyche*, before new words were formed from it, was simply "life" or something internal, such as the blood, which was necessary to life.

Leaving the word "soul" for the present, we will next look at some examples of "spirit."

Mark i. 10.—He saw.....the *Spirit* as a dove descending upon him.

Mark i. 12.—And straightway the *Spirit* driveth him forth into the wilderness.

In these passages the Greek word *pneuma* (without a capital letter) is translated "Spirit"; but this "spirit," sometimes called "Holy," is an imaginary being or influence from another realm. Setting aside, therefore, this class of spirits, I will select examples connected with man.

Luke viii. 55.—Jesus "called, saying, Maiden arise. And her *spirit* (*pneuma*) returned, and she rose up immediately.

Acts vii. 59.—And they stoned Stephen.....he saying, Lord Jesus, receive my *spirit* (*pneuma*).

John iii. 8.—The *wind* (*pneuma*) bloweth where it listeth.....so is everyone that is born of the *spirit* (*pneuma*).

In the Greek the word *pneuma* is said to signify: "breath, life, soul, air, a gentle wind." As a matter of fact, *pneuma* was derived from the verb *pneo*, "I breathe": hence the word was given both to the breath and to some supposed force within all living persons which enabled them to breathe. When this breath or force had left the body, those from whom it had departed were dead. In the first of the passages quoted, Jesus is stated to have caused this indispensable self-acting energy to return. In the second passage, the breath or spirit was returned "to the Lord who gave it" (Eccl. xii. 7). In the third passage we have an example in which *pneuma*

denotes "the wind," and another in which it is applied to an imaginary divine influence; but from Acts ii. 2, 4, this also appears to be wind. It is in the latter sense—as a holy wind—that the word most often appears in the New Testament. In the following example the *pneuma* is said to be "troubled" and "refreshed":—

John xiii. 21.—Jesus was "troubled in the *spirit*."

2 Cor. vii. 13.—Paul says of Titus: "his *spirit* had been refreshed."

These two passages refer to conditions of the mind. In the first case, a thought had arisen that things were not progressing favourably, which is called being "troubled in spirit"; in the second case, a feeling of relief was experienced upon hearing that things were not so bad as had been thought—which sensation is spoken of as being "refreshed in spirit." In neither case had "the spirit" anything to do with the matter referred to in the context.

We have seen that the original meaning of *psyche* was "life," and that of *pneuma* "breath or a gentle wind"; but as the years rolled on the two words were employed in several other senses. With the latter I have nothing to do. The primary signification of *psyche* and *pneuma* are sufficient to show that the so-called "soul" and "spirit" in man are purely materialistic, and could not by any possibility survive the death of the body. To say, then, that the life and breath could be separated from the body and live after death is to utter pure, unadulterated nonsense.

If there be an immortal part of the body, it must have the power to think and reason, and to feel that it was a complete personality in itself. Now, according to the New Testament, there really *is* an internal part of the human organism which is the seat of the will, the understanding, the moral sense, the affections, desires, and passions. This great internal organ is the heart, which was known to contain four cavities, in which it was conceived were stored up all kinds of thoughts imaginable. The latter were called the "abundance" or "treasure" of the heart (Luke vi. 45; Matt. xii. 34, 35), from which store might be brought forth any of the thoughts at will. In the case of the righteous these thoughts were all good, in that of the ungodly they were all evil. The following are examples:—

Matt. ix. 4.—Wherefore think ye evil in your heart?

Matt. xii. 34.—Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.

Luke ii. 19.—Mary kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart.

Luke iii. 15.—Men reasoned in their hearts concerning John.

Luke xxiv. 38.—Wherefore do reasonings arise in your heart?

Acts viii. 22.—Repent.....perhaps the thoughts of thy heart may be forgiven thee.

Rom. x. 10.—For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness.

Heb. iv. 12.—To discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

The foregoing are but a few of the many passages which might be cited. We are also told that "the heart was glad" or that there was "sorrow in the heart," showing that this organ was the seat of those sensations. It may, of course, be said that these and all other references to the heart were merely metaphorical, and that we ourselves have in a large measure adopted the same manner of speaking. The latter statement is, no doubt, true; but we never could have done so had it not been believed in past times that everything stated in the New Testament was inspired, and therefore correct. But that the early Christians believed the heart was the seat of all thoughts, reasoning, and emotions is evident from the fact that the word employed is *kardia*, the common

name for the material fleshy heart, and also because all the New Testament writers speak as if there could be no possible doubt upon the subject. Take the following, for instance, as an example:—

Mark vii. 18-22.—Are ye so without understanding? Perceive ye not that whatsoever from without goeth into the man.....goeth not into his heart, but into his belly, and goeth out into the draught.....But from within, out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, covetings, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, railing, pride, foolishness.

There is nothing metaphorical here: the writer plainly refers to organs of the body—the stomach, the intestines, and the heart—and he undoubtedly believed that the feelings and desires which might result in the iniquities mentioned proceeded from the heart. The Hebrews in Old Testament times had the same ideas respecting that organ, which were handed down without being questioned. The ancient Assyrians, however, believed that the seat of all sensations and emotions was the liver; so in their writings we hear of the latter organ rejoicing, or being grieved or troubled. In the passage last quoted, Jesus is represented as endeavouring to prove to his disciples that the heart was the seat of all the mental faculties; of this there can be no doubt whatever. In this connection it should also be remembered that prior to the year 1628 not a single medical man in all Christendom knew what was the real function of the heart.

ABRACADABRA.

### A Fable.

ONCE upon a time, a child was born. It was nameless, but its father's name was Eternal Right, and its mother's name was Instinct. In its right hand was a cluster of grapes; in its left a harp with only one string. In its hair were almond blossoms, and over its head a golden nimbus shone faintly.

Now, having been born in a respectable land where everyone is respectable (yes, you may smile), and where all are naked under their clothes, as was befitting, the child had to be christened. Therefore, a number of people took the child and set out on journey to a church. The walls of the church were made of the golden pollen from bees' legs; for the roof violet petals were used; and, would you believe it? segments of a rainbow were used instead of mortar. I think that now you would like to know who were the people who went with the child. Well, I will tell you. In the company there was a mystical Atheist, a man who sang pretty songs, a smiling woman who said something about heaven being near the hearth; and—oh bother, everyone was there who did not have locks on their doors and did not mind whether you wore low heels or high heels. To me they cried, "Come with us." But I replied, "No; I cannot. I am busy trying to explain the universe in my prospective book on the game of 'Tiddley Winks, or what a little Ignorance governs the World.' Call him," I shouted, "Tosspot or Tinklenob."

So they went to the church, and the Friar took the child in his arms. "What shall we name him?" he asked. Before there was time for an answer the infant was transformed into a torch. The Friar ran like hell, and has not been seen since. The smiling woman grasped the torch, which did not burn her, as she had had dealings with worse things than fire, and they are matters which I must not talk about in a fable. "God bless my soul!" said the mystical Atheist, as he brushed a fly off his nose. The man who sang pretty songs laughed, right down from his mouth to the tip of his toes, and they all agreed that the name of the torch should be Reason.

WILLIAM REPTON.

### The Blank Wall.

#### IV.

THE mind sufficiently virile to detach itself from the local conventions of commonplace existence and resist the stream of mediocrity is rare. This natural docility of the normal mind, intensified by the daily deluge of fatuous newspapers, creates a mental atmosphere in society which is hostile to all ideas outside the most elementary and obvious manifestations of life; and absorbs every cunning tyranny and sly despotism with an almost incredible eagerness. No lie is too great or too fantastic for the normal mind, providing that the lie is based upon the continued acceptance of commonplace ideas and conventional thought.

The evolving of character in such a diseased environment where servile emotions must predominate, is almost an impossibility. By character it is not intended to convey the orthodox conception. The mechanical devotion to a mechanical and joyless labour; the feverish slavery of body and mind to the immoralities of modern business and trade do not involve the necessity of character at all; they demand the lifeless infallibility of the electric clock. "Character" which submits without even a minimum of mental protest to the insistent demands of modern conventional ideas, either in religion, art, or in commerce, cannot correctly be termed character—it is inertia, indifference to the reality of life, contentment, mental vacuity, the cessation of growth, and death.

The modern civilized world is peopled with that type of devitalized individual whose mental and intellectual qualities have never even commenced to function. You can do very little or nothing for them, or with them. Everything seems to fail. Religion, Art, Science, Philosophy, Freethought, Mysticism, Materialism. It seems that the whole gamut of human thought is entirely unable to aid or develop the normal civilized brain.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

### Acid Drops.

The capture of Jerusalem by the British has quite naturally given rise to a lot of pious "gush" in some of the newspapers, and later we quite expect columns concerning the feelings of devotion with which the Christians, and Jews, and Atheists, and Agnostics, etc., which make up the Army, approached the "Holy City." Informed readers will smile, even though pious ones are moved to tears. And one thing we have observed is that our English papers are wisely discreet when dealing with the former conquests of Jerusalem, in their handling of the earlier Christian captures. Jerusalem has suffered more from the presence of Christians than from that of Mohammedans, and for hundreds of years they set Christians an example of tolerance and enlightenment.

Even modern Christians ought to feel grateful to the Mohammedans for one thing. Until the War broke out they provided, at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a guard of soldiers, for the purpose of keeping peace between Christians when they came to worship at the grave of their Saviour. This form of entertainment between brethren in the Christian faith was suspended when Europe offered a wider theatre for the exhibition of their activities.

At the Home Ruridiaconal Council, the Rev. W. S. Flynn read a paper on "The Difficulties of the Church with regard to Children." We admit that this is a difficulty. There is the difficulty of getting hold of them, and there is the difficulty of keeping them afterwards. And there is the increasing difficulty of inducing parents to hand over their children to the manipulation of these organized kidnapers.

The Young Men's Christian Association is nothing if not modest. A Christmas appeal on its behalf for half a million of money has been made. Christian finance is more flourishing nowadays than when the Founder was sold for thirty shillings.

The newspapers have been publishing bold headlines concerning the death of the Rev. Alfred Brandon, of Chelsea, who died at the age of 101. What would those editors have done had they had to record the deaths of Adam, Methuselah, or Noah, who each lived nine centuries?

Defenders of the Design Argument will note with pleasure that the wife of a labourer at Mold, Flintshire, has given birth to four children, and that the quartette are living.

The *Evening News* is to be congratulated upon having discovered and engaged the services of the newest and most unique of all Christian apologists. Week after week Mr. Machen's contributions become more and more astounding and bewildering, and there must be boundless rejoicing in the camp of the orthodox. He began by declaring that we live "in and by and through mysteries." Then he affirmed that "to remove the veils of enigmas is the office of religion." His next statement was that religion is irrational and "entirely incredible." The Faith is the supreme mystery, and yet its office is to remove the veils.

Mr. Machen's last article, which appeared in the *Evening News* for December 7, surpasses all its predecessors in irrationality. This is the seventh article on "God and the War," and for a wonder the War is at last alluded to thus:—

We say we do not understand how an Almighty and most merciful Father can allow the abomination of the War—can allow any pain or anguish of body or spirit. But have we the slightest ground for expecting to understand this or any other problem?

We unhesitatingly answer that question in the negative; and we maintain that we have no more ground for believing in "an Almighty and most merciful Father." Mr. Machen admits this himself when he tells us that even God is nothing but an hypothesis. Surely, apologetics never fell to such depths of absurdity before.

Mr. Machen seems incapable of stating a case accurately. For example, he says that it is idle for a man "to declare himself a purely rational creature, living in a rational, demonstrable universe"; but no Freethinker worth his salt ever even imagined that he lived in a rational universe. Our claim is that we are rational beings, trying our best to understand and utilize the chemical and physical laws under which we live. Mr. Machen also asserts that Atheism is "the confession that there is no riddle of the Universe." A falser statement was never made. Science takes the riddle for granted, and has for its only aim the solution of the same by observation and experiment. Really, Mr. Machen is either wickedly trifling with a great subject, or else mischievously pulling the legs of credulous readers.

Although there are many hundreds of Church of England army chaplains, the result of their work is questionable. "Seventy per cent. of the men at the front do not know that the Church has a message at all," says Dr. Lyttleton.

The Rev. W. M. Davidson, vicar of Christ Church, Tottenham, dropped dead whilst acting as referee in a hockey match. There is no moral.

Gipsy Smith has written an article with the title "Behind the Firing Line." Many of the clergy are behind the rectory door.

"The chief fault of the Conscientious Objector is to have taken Jesus and His Gospel too seriously," says the Rev. Thomas Phillips. Most Christians jocularly regard the Prince of Peace as the God of Battles.

Mr. Macpherson, M.P., stated recently in the House of Commons that there were 2,082 Army chaplains serving abroad. As these gentlemen rank as officers, we may esti-

mate their pay at £300 a year each, and the total represents an annual outlay of £624,000. The rest of the Black Army is exempted from military service.

An Anti-Semitic bias seems to be one of the many attractive features of our amusing contemporary, the *New Witness*. There is nothing to be ashamed of in a bias. We are willing to admit that we have an anti-Christian bias. We are not certain that the Brothers Chesterton would be equally candid. They would probably dodge the question by telling us that some of their best friends are Jews. We cannot see that there can be any reasonable objection to a bias if the criticism it prompts is well-informed as well as witty and malicious. Our English Jews, more particularly those of politics, finance, and commerce, have their weak spots, which are fair enough game for ridicule. You cannot pay them a greater compliment than to mistake them for blue-blooded Englishmen; and if by any means they acquire an old English surname, they prize it more than platinum, gold, or precious stones. It may be a subtle compliment paid to the qualities of the British race when Samuel becomes Montagu; Cohen, Palgrave; and Levy is disguised as Lee. We could point out other idiosyncrasies less amusing in the English Jew; but, no doubt, the editor of the *New Witness* has already noted them in his friends.

While we have no occasion here to dispute seriously Mr. Chesterton's knowledge of the social and mental habits of English Jews, we are afraid we cannot but think that he and his readers are amusingly ignorant of many things they ought to know before they abuse the foreign Jews. A week or so ago we noticed that a Mr. Ashton had ventured, presumably for the first time in his life, so far East as Houndsditch, which, as everyone knows, is only Semi-Semitic. Yet even on the fringe of Jewry he had made a wonderful discovery. We can imagine how great would have been his success if he had had the courage to voyage so far as Brick Lane. He returned West with his marvellous addition to the world's knowledge verified by laborious studies in the British Museum, and then amazed Mr. Chesterton and the guileless readers of the *New Witness* with an article called "The Truth about Yiddish."

What, then, is the truth about Yiddish? It is really no more than what every schoolboy in the East End knows. Who, except the Editor of the *New Witness* and his readers, needs to be told that Yiddish is only the English form of *Judisch* = Jewish; that the basis of the language is German; that, although written in Hebrew characters, the percentage of Hebrew words is only small, say about ten per cent.? All this is damning evidence of the pro-German sympathies of the foreign Jew, he thinks in German, of course, in spite of the fact that he can neither speak nor understand literary or spoken German, and that no German can understand him. How did Mr. Ashton come by his great discovery? Probably some more intelligent Anti-Semite told him that Yiddish was, of course, *Judæo-German*, and then our truth-loving young gentleman rushes to the British Museum Reading Room, finds nothing under Yiddish in the ordinary encyclopædia, misses, in his feverish hurry, an informative article under this heading in an American encyclopædia, but comes across what he wants in the *Jewish Encyclopædia* in a learned article by Professor Leo Wiener of Harvard. The amazing truth about Yiddish, as known to the *New Witness*, is nothing more than a few quotations from Professor Wiener, a fatuous suggestion that the Jew uses the Hebrew characters to disguise the Teutonic basis of the language, and a stupid sneer at the Jews having an encyclopædia of their own, as if none of us had heard of or used *The Catholic Encyclopædia*. It is, perhaps, too much to expect an Anti-Semite to learn Yiddish; but if he makes inquiries, he will find that it is not a mere jargon, but a language with more "than mere historical importance, grammatically constructed, and possessing something of the straightforward word-arrangement of English." We do not want to discourage Mr. Ashton. We hope he will make many excursions to the real East End Jewry, and we hope his

future discoveries will be not less amusing and instructive than his *Truth about Yiddish*.

Witchcraft, says the *Daily Express*, "still flourishes apace in Germany." But we understood that Germany had given up everything Christian, and was devoted to freethinking and Materialism! As a matter of fact, witchcraft "flourishes" in all parts of Christendom—Britain included. And look at the trade in charms that is carried on. The truth is that in every country in the world there are large numbers of people who are little removed—mentally—from savages. And the clergy everywhere make full use of the circumstance.

Immediately after reading the above statement concerning Germany, we came across an account of stones and pieces of rock that were lifted from the ground during the digging of a dug-out at Embrook Manor, Cheriton. Our readers will not have forgotten the Angels of Mons, and, later, the angels seen at Grays, Essex. How much removed are the people who believe these stories from the mental conditions amid which witchcraft flourishes? And when we have done with these affairs, what are we to say of the beliefs that go to make up orthodox Christianity? Is there any difference in quality between these and the other beliefs noted above? Hobbes' statement remains eternally true; religion is superstition allowed, superstition is religion not allowed.

"Romance is perpetually illustrated in the history of the Church," says the Right Hon. G. W. E. Russell. Fiction also has its place in the same history.

A publisher announces a new publication with the alluring title, *The Tree of Heaven*. That tree should look well in the golden streets.

A newspaper paragraph states: "The death has occurred of Captain Robert Hoare, an Elder Brother of the Trinity." A cynic might add that this makes the tangle of the Trinity still more complicated.

Sir Robert Perks condemns State public-houses on the ground that they would be rivals of the Sunday-schools and the Church Institutes. Yet the alternatives are between spirituous and spiritual intoxication.

We have said the same thing times out of number, but we are none the less pleased to find it re-echoed in the columns of the *Daily Mail*. It is from a Reading correspondent of that paper:—

My work in life takes me a great deal into various parts of the country, and as I go about I am surprised at the growing number of people who, like myself, are Churchmen, and who are saying that "the Church is one of the biggest failures of the war."

The Church has given neither effective help towards winning the War nor reasonable help towards creating a frame of mind for making future wars impossible. It has shown all the timidity and indecision of the opportunist; and that type of person, if he makes no deadly enemies, makes no warm friends.

A movement is on foot to close all public-houses, picture palaces, etc., on January 6—the "national" day of prayer. We would suggest that a more effective way of filling the Churches on that day would be to make abstention from church an offence under the D.O.R.A., or giving a pound of sugar to everyone who attends. Where humbug is in evidence, bribery or force seem not unfit accompaniments. And it is in line with Christian tradition for parsons to call God's attention to the worshippers in church—many of whom are there because they can't get either into a "pub" or a picture palace.

At a conference held at Birmingham of representatives of the Church of England, the Roman Catholic Church, and the Free Church Council, a protest was made against pro-

posed interference with the present marriage laws. It is highly significant that the proposed extension of divorce, which will chiefly benefit the working classes, should have united these three ecclesiastical opponents.

While worshipping in Merthyr Catholic Church, John Killaher died suddenly. Had he been attending a Free-thought lecture, there would have been an awful warning to others.

Many a true word is spoken in jest. Also the deepest truths are sometimes uttered by children. According to an educational periodical, a boy in a school examination wrote as follows in an essay on the Japanese: "Until recently the Japanese used to fight with bows and arrows, but now they are equipped with the dreadful arms of Christians."

The Prussianizing of the nation goes on apace, and even the Churches are imitating the officials. The National Free Church Council is considering a scheme of home visitation. In each district "Church messengers" will undertake to call at the houses, especially those of "wives, widows, and dependents of soldiers and sailors." We hope that these busy-bodies will meet with the reception they deserve.

A "Y.M.C.A. synagogue" is an unexpected feature of the camp of the Jewish Regiment stationed in the West Country declares the *Daily News*, and adds that the colonel is "an Irishman and a Christian." It looks as if the age of miracles had not passed.

The Bishop of Southwark will introduce a Bill in the House of Lords to close St. Olave's Church, Tooley Street, London. Is this a symptom of the long-promised revival of religion?

Rev. R. F. Horton, Dean Inge, Rev. Principal Garvie, and a number of others have just issued a manifesto declaring that only Christianity can bring healing to the world, and suggesting that "belligerents and neutrals" should meet together in prayer. We haven't much doubt that if the people of the different countries could meet together, the War might be soon brought to a close. But it will need something better than prayer to either bring them together or to produce good from the meeting. It is lack of sense, not want of prayer, that is mainly responsible for the present trouble. Religion did not prevent the trouble occurring, and it will certainly not put an end to it. And what is the matter with the piety of Germany? It is as Christian as any other country in the War, and more Christian than some.

Referring to the Romanes lectures, the *Daily News* points out that Dr. Romanes was, "for the greater part of his life," an Agnostic, "but he died an extreme High Churchman." It did not add, however, that Romanes change of opinion was preceded by a lingering and terrible illness.

Canon B. H. Streeter, writing on "Immortality," says he would "not be satisfied by a future life from which the element of kindly humour was excluded." The worthy canon will have some difficulty in finding what he wants in the religion of the Man of Sorrows.

Some pious folk assert that Providence imposed the world-war on account of our "sins," but there are few signs that the War is improving morals. At Kent Assizes in one day thirteen cases of bigamy were dealt with.

Dr. Charles Sarolea, in his new book, *German Problems and Personalities*, denounces "the poison of Lutheranism," which he considers has aided and abetted Prussian militarism. Yet the dear clergy will insist that the Prussians are "Atheists."

The *Sydney Bulletin* recently referred to the Kaiser as "The man who slew his God." Before the War religious folk professed to admire the Kaiser's piety.



## C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 6, Manchester; January 13, London; January 20, Southampton; January 27, Swansea; February 3, Birmingham; February 17, Leicester.

## To Correspondents.

C. M.—Of course, it is not "business," in the commercial sense, to sell pamphlets at cost price, and make no charge for labour, etc. But it is excellent business from the point of view of propaganda, and it is for that the *Freethinker* exists.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—From a Brother O. A. S., £1; B. Jenkins (Johannesburg), £1; P. Morris (Bechuanaland), 5s.; R. Viedge (South Africa), £1 1s.; A. Cayford, 10s.

A CORRESPONDENT is very anxious to possess a copy of Shelley's *Refutation of Deism*. This was issued as a pamphlet a few years back, and if any of our readers would care to part with his copy, will he please let us know.

T. HEBLOTT.—Pleased to have so hearty an appreciation of the *Freethinker* from a friend of Charles Bradlaugh. Your order has received attention from our shop-manager.

R. L. (Plymouth).—We should ourselves like to more frequently deal with new books that are of interest to Freethinkers. But there are so many other things that need attention, and we have only 16 pages—and 24 hours per day. Morley's *Recollections* was one of the things that could not be put off.

H. KEANE.—We have very pleasant memories of Blackburn. Why not see what can be done to revive the Movement in that town?

F. DORRINGTON.—Something on the same subject may have been done, but not this pamphlet. *The Mother of God* is a quite new pamphlet.

S. LONDON BRANCH N. S. S.—Reports of meetings must have the signature of the writer attached, who should be an official of the Branch.

W. M.—Glad to see the letters in the *Essex Chronicle*. Such communications do much good to the cause.

We are reminded by a correspondent that the "Acid Drop" in our issue for December 2, reading "Catholic Game. Day to Heaven," should have read "Way to Heaven."

*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.

We have space to do no more than barely acknowledge here the response to our appeal, on behalf of the Committee, for funds to discharge the balance of the liabilities incurred in connection with the fight with the L.C.C. A full list of acknowledgments to date appears in another column. All our correspondents agree it is a great victory, and we hope the Council will be content to leave it as it is. If not, we shall all just have to buckle to again. The entire sum to be raised is between £80 and £100, and this we hope to see accomplished in the course of a week or two.

There were two splendid audiences at Glasgow to listen to Mr. Cohen's lectures on Sunday last. The hall was comfortably filled in the forenoon and crowded in the evening. The audiences followed both lectures with the keenest appreciation, and no lecturer ought to expect more than that. There is a prospect of a real forward movement being initiated from Glasgow in the near future, and the West of

Scotland will thus take its part in the new advance of Free-thought that is taking place all over the country.

Travelling to and from Glasgow takes up practically the whole of Saturday and Monday, and, with Sunday on the platform, a great hole is made in the week. A number of letters remain, in consequence, undealt with this week. Correspondents will, we have no doubt, appreciate the difficulty, and excuse the delay. As it is, a deal of the writing in this week's issue has had to be done in the train going to and from Scotland. The compositors are the chief sufferers by this, as it makes our "copy" a little less legible than usual.

It seems there is now a chance—even though a small one—of Mr. Fisher's Education Bill coming before Parliament at an early date. In the circumstances we should like Freethinkers all over the country to see what can be done in connection with Trades Unions, labour groups, and other local bodies to get a resolution passed in favour of Secular Education, and to see that the same is forwarded to the Minister of Education. We gave this advice some time back, and some of our readers acted on it, with good results. The resolution should move along three lines: (1) The long-standing quarrel over the control of the schools by the clergy, and its obstructive effect on our educational policy; (2) The manifest injustice of compelling all citizens to support the religious opinions of one section of the community; (3) The duty of the modern State to maintain an attitude of strict neutrality with regard to all forms of religious or anti-religious opinion. We hope Freethinkers will take this counsel seriously to heart. We *must* clear the clergy out of the schools if our work is to bear its full fruits.

Freethought papers, which have always a struggle to exist under the most favourable conditions, naturally feel the War pressure acutely. Our gallant contemporary, the *New York Truthseeker*, announces that it is compelled to raise its subscription price from \$3 to \$3.50. This is owing to the increased wages of compositors, etc., and to an advance of 60 per cent. in the price of paper. The *Truthseeker* is dirt cheap at the advanced price, and we do not think that any American Freethinker—or English one either—will begrudge the advance.

In this country the paper shortage is becoming more acute, and the price is rising week by week. It is now nearly 600 per cent. above pre-War prices. But the shortage is bothering us even more than the price. The latter may be got over somehow; but we can't print without paper, and early in the new year we may have to take a fresh review of the situation. But we shall put off making any alteration so long as we can. The *Freethinker* is one of the few papers that has continued unchanged, and we should like to keep it so during what we hope are the closing months of the War.

Manchester friends will please note that Mr. T. F. Palmer, whose articles will have made his name familiar to all *Freethinker* readers, lectures twice at Manchester to-day (Dec. 16). The afternoon lecture is at 3 o'clock, subject: "The Birth and Death of Worlds"; evening, at 6.30: "The Antiquity of Man." We hope to hear that the Co-operative Hall (Downing Street) is well filled, if not crowded, on both occasions.

One of our friends at the Front writes Miss Vance:—

We had a parade on Sunday morning, and were addressed by the Assistant Chaplain-General to the Forces. Knowing your horror of war, I feel sure you will be delighted to know that the A.C.G. promises that Christianity will banish war in the future. He was very emphatic about it. Unfortunately, we were not invited to ask questions, so I was unable to find out why it (Christianity) had always bolstered up war in the past. Neither could I understand why its leaders, from Benedict XII. to the Archbishop of Canterbury, seem to have made no protest at the beginning. Indeed, that brilliant intellect, the Bishop of London, called it a "holy war" the other day. To do the A.C.G. justice, he didn't do that; he termed it "a hellish business"; but he thought it wiser not

to go into the matter of proving that Christianity could stop it. Or perhaps he thought that was a little too deep for us.

He also said that he knew most of us didn't believe the Bible, but rather had some idea of evolution at the back of our heads. He didn't attempt to disprove our ideas, but he went on to make a few nasty remarks about "those brutes of the R.P.A." I felt horribly guilty then, because in my pocket reposed the *Freethinker*.

Most of the men took the *Daily Mail* to read in the back benches, while waiting for the service to follow, of course, and I took the *Free*. I refrained, because I found him so interesting. However, all is well, now that we know that a sans-war future is assured to humanity.

Mr. P. M. Killop writes us from Cape Town:—

I have noticed with very much pleasure that you have lately had several correspondents from this part of the world. I have been in this country some thirty-six or thirty-seven years, and have travelled all over it. I think that I may fairly claim to know a little about its people, both Dutch and those born in other countries than this. In almost every part—more particularly in Johannesburg and Cape Town—there has been for the last ten years, at least, a pretty vigorous Freethought campaign carried on. Of course, I know very well that the work done would appear to be very small compared with the work carried on in such centres of huge populations as London, Paris, or Berlin; but taking the small number of even our largest towns, and the shifting nature of their inhabitants into consideration, the few Freethought stalwart residents here have done wonders. A few years ago in Johannesburg there was a very strong Freethought organization which held meetings regularly every Sunday evening with great success, and distributed large quantities of Freethought literature. These meetings were well attended, and had some very able lectures. I have forgotten most of their names. After the lectures the meetings were open for questions and discussion, and we used to have a real good time. But, alas, the meetings gradually died a natural death—not from lack of interest or enthusiasm—but through the dispersion of its members. That is the real cause of the failure of all organizations in this country. The settled population is so very small. Here today and in Pretoria, Durban, or some other town to-morrow. This, I believe, has its advantages as well as its disadvantages. Your real Freethinker is always at work, no matter where he may be. I call to mind one man—a Frenchman, named Strauss—one of the first to leave here for Europe when this horrible War started, and, poor fellow, one of the first to die for the France which he devotedly loved—carried on a Freethought campaign, almost unaided, in Cape Town for years with great success. Since then the work has been done by several others, including George Martin (who has also gone over to the great majority), and Messrs. Evans and Rafter. I sometimes put in a word or two, but I am now well on for seventy years of age, and, I suppose, am getting either tired or lazy, and do not feel equal to doing much outdoor speaking. There are not near enough copies of your paper find their way here. I am perfectly sure ever so many more could be sold if they were available. There is plenty of literature in the shape of pamphlets and books which a few of us purchase, and, after reading, pass round, and in that way, I have no doubt, do a little good. I would like to tell you that I read every line of your paper. It is my weekly treat. No other paper that I get has anything like the attraction for me that yours has.

We are quite sure from what we have learned that South Africa needs at present a capable organizer. Perhaps the man will arise one day. With regard to the *Freethinker*, when the War is over, we hope to make arrangements for a more effective supply of the paper, both in South Africa and elsewhere—not forgetting the United States.

We have often complained of the Post Office; it is only just to give a word of praise when it is deserved. The other week we wrote an article at home, and posted it to the office. There was no indication *inside* the envelope, save the signature, that could lead to delivery. The letter did not turn up, and then we said things—particularly as we had to turn to on Tuesday afternoon (press day) and write a second article. After a time the letter arrived at the *Freethinker* office, and we then found that we omitted to address the envelope. Someone had "spotted" its destination, either through the signature or the nature of the article. So we again said things—about ourselves.

## Fund for Fighting the L.C.C.

Previously acknowledged, £6 16s.—Belgravia, 5s.; W. Mather, 10s.; J. Sumner, £1 1s.; J. Pendlebury, £2; W. P. Kenot, 5s.; E. B., £1 1s.; A. Delve, £1 1s.; Mrs. Harden, £1 1s.; L. Brandes, £6 6s.; A. J. Watson, 2s. 6d.; Lubton, 5s.; South London Branch, N. S. S., £1 1s.; H. Reeve, 2s. 6d.; A. Cayford, 2s. Total: £21 19s.

## The Everlasting Hills.

V.

(Concluded from p. 780.)

THE Nebular Hypothesis, originally propounded by Kant and other thinkers, and subsequently amplified by Laplace and Herschel, has since been subjected to a searching criticism by a succession of scientists. From this ordeal it has emerged purified and strengthened, and has now attained "a degree of probability amounting to proof." The Nebular Theory assumes that the space now occupied by the solar system was, at a period, immeasurably remote, filled up by a rotating spheroid of high tenuity and tremendous heat. This nebulous haze was the probable outcome of the collision of two previously separate bodies. The stupendous heat thus generated having gradually radiated into space, the glowing gases cooled, and shrank into a nucleus now represented by the sun.

Although astronomers and astro-physicists may differ concerning the precise details of these phenomena, they remain practically unanimous in their adhesion to some form of Nebular doctrine. They all take for granted a natural genesis and development of all the starry systems of the universe. Ball, Newcomb, and other eminent astronomers espoused the brilliant hypothesis that, for a time, the tendency on the part of the nebula to contract was counterbalanced by centrifugal force, but ultimately this disruptive force gained the ascendancy, and the outer region of the nucleus became detached from the remainder of the sphere. Rings similar to the first were successively detached, and from these the planets and their moons were formed. Plateau's fascinating experiment proves that by rotating a sphere of oil in a mixture of spirit and water this phenomenon may be repeated on a minor scale.

Many of the phenomena displayed in the solar system lend strong support to the Nebular explanation. For example, the planets lie much in the same plane. Their orbital and axial revolutions proceed in the same direction, thus providing numerous coincidences which are hardly accidental, the chances against which are many millions to one.

Again, the rate of cooling would of course follow the size: a small body cools more rapidly than a large one. The moon is cold and rigid; the earth is solid at the surface, but intensely hot within; Jupiter and Saturn, which are immensely larger, still retain much of their original heat, and have a much lower density than the earth.

The earth's rotation has fashioned it into the form of an orange. In other words, our planet is an oblate spheroid flattened at the poles. Its outline is also influenced by contraction caused by a gradual lowering of its temperature. When the earth had cooled down sufficiently, a thin crust appeared on its surface which slowly increased in thickness as the centuries rolled away. The present thickness of our planet's crust is still a matter of conjecture. But in the light of the fact that the density of the globe is about five and a half

times that of water, its interior must be extremely dense. For various weighty reasons many men of science have concluded that the earth is solid throughout, and possesses the elasticity of steel, a substance which is vastly more elastic than any other solid, even india rubber. Other scientific experts, however, favour Sir George Darwin's contention that the greater inequalities of the earth's surface require the support of a crust as rigid as that of granite, and extending to a depth of 1,000 miles only.

In any case, the constant cooling of the earth was certain to mould its crust into giant folds. The distribution of continents and oceans appears at the first glance to be so irregular that one might reasonably conclude that even the leading features of our planet's surface could scarcely be explained on any general principles. Deeper reflection, however, reveals the existence of certain peculiar features of the earth's configuration. There are the three main oceans—the Pacific, Indian, and Atlantic, with the lesser Arctic Sea. There exist also three huge land masses—North and South America, Africa—Europe, Asia—Australia, with a smaller Antarctic continent. It is true that Europe and Asia form a continuous land surface, but there are cogent reasons for considering them as separate continents. There lies a profound depression to the east of the Urals, and a slight lowering of the land-level would submerge the soil in the Caspian and Black Sea regions northwards to the Arctic Ocean. As Green insisted, the three chief continents have all been carved across by the hungry waves—Australia—Asia by the Sunda Straits, America by the Mexican Gulf, Europe—Africa by the Mediterranean. Moreover, each land area tends eastwards to the south. Nearly all South America is situated to the east of the Northern continent, while similar phenomena occur in South Africa and Australia.

Obviously, in a spinning sphere, its different parts would revolve concordantly, but as its continents emerged, the northern land masses, in consequence of their increased distance from the earth's centre, would revolve with a diminished and insufficient velocity. Therefore, it is claimed, there would occur "a tendency to torsion, giving rise to a line of rupture between the north and south, and carrying the Southern lands somewhat to the east. This consideration may account for the remarkable depression which runs round the world, forming the Gulf of Mexico, the Mediterranean, the Persian Gulf, and the sea between Asia and Australia."

The Arctic Ocean was long regarded as a comparatively shallow sea, but recent investigations, notably those of Nansen, prove that it is very deep. It is now estimated that the oceans cover three-fourths of the earth's surface, but this statement conveys an extremely inadequate idea of its vast volume of water. But this vastness becomes apparent when we remember that the average elevation of the continents is about 1,000 feet only, while the average depth of the oceans is probably 13,000; so that if our seas were spread evenly over the globe's surface, their depth would exceed 8,000 feet.

Although our earth has been the theatre of enormous changes in the distribution of land and water during the course of its protracted career, still, should the foregoing hypothesis prove sound, its chief protuberances must have persisted from primitive geological times. This theory has found eminent advocates, but many geologists of the first rank agree with Dr. Gregory's contention that the early aspects of our continents have long "been obliterated by the changes of geological times." Or, in the language of the famous Hutton: "The ruins of an older world are visible in the present state of our planet." hemisphere is very striking, whatever its causes may be.

The marked inclination displayed by continental areas to project southwards occurs in the case of India, South Africa, Southern America, and other regions. Again, several peninsulas show at their extremity an island or island group. Sicily stands near the southern end of Italy. Greenland has at its extremity an island chain. The peninsula of Alaska terminates with a group of isles. Lying off the extremity of India, we find Ceylon; the Terra del Fuego isles are adjacent to South America, while Australia ends southwards in Tasmania or Van Diemen's Land.

The preponderance of the ocean in the Southern Avebury argued that folded mountains arose from a diminution in the earth's diameter, and therefore "every great circle must have participated equally in the contraction." The earth's mountains running east and west would, therefore, broadly speaking, counterbalance those ranging from north to south. Now, the principal mountain masses of the Old World run more or less from east to west, while the tendency of the American mountains is to travel north and south. The one series of elevations thus appears to balance the other to a very material degree. Moreover, in the Northern hemisphere the mountain chains range east and west; for instance, the Pyrenees, Carpathians, Alps, and Himalayas; while the leading elevations of the Southern hemisphere extend north and south. This is true of the African ridge, the Andes, and others.

Lord Avebury also contended that the north and south directions of the mountains in the Southern hemisphere, combined with the presence of the vast ocean in the same region, suffice to explain the existence of southern promontories. Sir Francis Galton, however, replied that no conceivable accumulation of water could possibly give us promontories with a northerly direction. As a matter of fact, nearly all our northern promontories point south. But Avebury's rejoinder to this objection is very suggestive. "No such preponderance in the northern hemisphere would give us northerly pointing promontories, because there the great folds run not from north to south, but from east to west."

The map plainly shows the mountains stretching through Europe in a general east and west direction, but the fact is less apparent that, commencing with the Pyrenees, and passing through the Central Alps, the Carpathians, the Caucasus, and the chain of Elbruz to the Hindoo-Koosh, we at last reach the elevated plateau of Pamir, which towers at a height of 15,000 feet. Resuming our journey, we arrive at the still loftier tracts of Tibet—giant plains which exceed in altitude the greatest Alpine summits. These elevated plains lie enclosed between the stupendous heights of the Himalayas to the south and the Kuen-Lun range on the north. From this region the mountain fortresses ramify into other ranges until they finally reach the Pacific Ocean at Behring's Strait. These far-flung elevations form the backbone of the Eastern World, just as the mountain ranges of the Western Continent form the backbone of America.

In our own Alps the last important upheaval elevated the Mont Blanc range, and although at present no considerable changes are occurring there, the occasional earth movements which invade the Alpine area indicate that the processes of mountain-building are still in operation.

T. F. PALMER.

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Lord Hugh Cecil said in the House of Commons that we are "Christians first and Englishmen afterwards." A writer in a Sunday paper retorted that he was born an Englishman, and Christened some weeks later.

## Writers and Readers.

THE Editor has been kind enough to invite me to write a monthly article, wherein I am to talk about writers and their readers, and any other bookish matters of interest to Freethinkers. I am thus given plenty of scope, since of all people, Freethinkers are the most catholic in their tastes. Preferences we all have, undoubtedly; but, I trust, few or no exclusions where good literature is concerned. Unlike our Catholic friends, we have no *Index expurgatorius*; or, at least, we have no black list of the world's greatest books. What all of us can do, and what a few of us have done, is to draw up for ourselves a list of books that are really bad. My own list is becoming a rather long one, and one day I intend to print a short guide to the worst books in our language, which, I trust, will delight and perhaps, surprise, my literary friends. But here I shall avoid, if possible, any reference to worthless books, except when they are necessary for the pointing of a moral. My concern will be to recommend books that I have myself found valuable, or suggestive in thought or style, or in both. Another thing I want to say is, that I shall be glad to consider any relevant comments my readers may be inclined to make, if they will put themselves to the trouble of writing to me in care of the Editor. Many things that appear difficult turn out to be easy enough when once you have altered your point of view, when you try hard to see a book from some other person's angle. My aspiration is to be a sort of literary father-confessor, to absolve you from your sins of commission or omission, to set you, with your own assistance, on the narrow path of literary rectitude.

Let me give an example! An earnest young friend of mine once went in fear of damnation, because, with the best intentions, he could not bring himself to believe in George Meredith. Mr. Foote, he knew, had a sort of discipular veneration for the master, and this knowledge did but serve to make his own want of faith all the more glaring. In the end he came to me for ghostly advice. What could he do to be saved? I found, as I had shrewdly expected, that he had approached Meredith in the wrong way. He had been told that the novels were among the finest pictures of modern life, and, having no guide, he had begun with *The Shaving of Shagput*. He could make neither head nor tale of this somewhat difficult allegory; it was not what he had been led to expect. He then turned to *One of our Conquerors*, in which the story for the first hundred pages moves about as easily as a fly in a glue-pot. He tried again, being attracted by the title of *Diana of the Crossways*. Those who know that abortive attempt at epigrammatic brilliance can imagine his feelings. I hardly think that Mr. Foote, with all his ardent will-to-believe could have stood such a strain upon his faith. My earnest young friend, at my suggestion, began again; this time, with *Evan Harrington*, *Harey Richmond*, *Rhoda Fleming*, and the incomparable *Richard Feverel*. He is now a confirmed Meredithian, albeit with certain wise reservations on the score of the master's style and treatment in fiction. To any writer the method of approach is important, to the more difficult it is everything.

Any reason is good enough which prompts us to read, or read again, a book that has something of a solid value; and the centenary of the birth or death of a writer, or the year of publication of a book, is generally felt to be a valid excuse for a permanent, or, at least, a passing, interest. It is certainly so for those of us who have no more than an average share of intellectual curiosity.

The year just coming to a close has seen quite a number of centenaries of birth. Holyoake, G. H. Lewes, Jowett, and H. D. Thoreau, a sort of American blend of Rousseau and Carlyle, the "Bachelor of Nature," as Emerson called him—all these began their sublunary careers in 1817. Holyoake, one of the pioneers of popular Free-thought, is known to most of us nowadays only by repute, and through his books. He seldom lectured, I believe, in the latter part of his life, and when he did, he gave us the impression of being out of touch with the militant methods of current Rationalism, of being just a little too anxious to show himself amiable to everybody. I don't think that he was consciously a "trimmer," but he seems to have prided himself on the number of his acquaintances among the kind of people who have little sympathy with advanced thought. Mr. McCabe's biography, which is, or ought to be, known to all Freethinkers, is padded out with complimentary letters from political bigwigs. Yet, in the main, it is a painstaking piece of work, if not quite critical enough, the subject being touched up after the manner of the popular painters of literary full-length portraits. Holyoake was a ready writer, with a natural turn for eloquence and picturesque phrasing. His volumes of recollections are entertaining and instructive. The best side of him is seen in his *Trial of Theism*, which was first published in 1857, and later, with revisions and additions, in 1877. I suggest that the Rationalist Press Association might do much worse than include it in their valuable series of cheap reprints.

Lewes (1817-1878), who was one of Holyoake's acquaintances, was, like him, a pioneer of Rationalism, but of a somewhat less popular kind. He was a versatile writer, with the born journalist's knack of putting difficult matter in an engaging way. His *Biographical History of Philosophy* is a good example of bright expository criticism from the anti-metaphysical or Positivist standpoint. The *Problems of Life and Mind* (1874-9) was the result of a lifetime's study of nature and mind, and he became, as he went on, more critical of the Comtean doctrine. As one of his admirers rightly says, "he rejected as 'metempirical' what lay beyond experience, but he would not, like Spencer, affect to derive comfort from the unknowable. He was one of the first to emphasize the importance of the social factor in the development of the mind." To literary criticism Lewes brought an excursive understanding and a well-developed taste unhampered by a preconceived system. His *Life of Goethe*, if supplemented by Carlyle, Scherer, and Dowden, is quite the best introduction to the poet and thinker. In a more popular manner, his little book on the *Spanish Drama* (1847)—Studies of Calderon and Lope de Vega—has long been a favourite of mine. It brings out in a luminous way the world of difference between the dramatic art of Catholic Spain and that of our freethinking Elizabethan England. The little book has not been reprinted, but copies are often to be met with on the stalls. Many of Lewes' essays are hidden away in the volumes of the more scholarly reviews of the time, and to the *Fortnightly* (Feb., 1872) we have to turn for the best all-round appreciation of Dickens ever written.

Benjamin Jowett (1817-1893) was Regius Professor of Greek, the Master of Balliol, and the authority on Plato for those of us who have little or no acquaintance with the language. He did a good deal to undermine the faith of the young men of what are called the ruling classes, who came under his influence, but I am afraid he would have had an epileptic fit if he had seen his name associated with those of Holyoake and Lewes. His paper on the "Interpretation of Scripture," in *Essays and Reviews* (1860), is said to have created a panic in the Church, and

he came near losing his Oxford post. This taught him—if, indeed, he had much need of teaching, being at bottom a Pragmatist—the value of compromise, and henceforward undermined, rather than assaulted, the theological positions. His *dictum* that the “practice of divinity has permanently lowered the standard of truth,” and many others equally severe, no doubt helped many to avoid a theological career. Jowett remained a priest of the Established Church, believing, as so many of its members do, in a Christianity *without* Christ. A witty and malicious caricature of his style and religious ideas will be found by the curious in Mr. W. H. Mallock's *New Republic*.

Thoreau (1817-1861) is as stimulating a writer as his friend Emerson; but his readers, unfortunately, are few and far between. Laziness seems to be the only excuse for not reading him, as “Walden,” “A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers,” and a volume of essays, poems, and letters are reprinted in the “Scott Library.” His father was a phlegmatic and sober Frenchman, and his mother a volatile and voluble Scotswoman. It is small wonder that the son was given to paradox. Thoreau was a sickly boy, and no great lover of work, and his parents decided to send him to Harvard and make a pedagogue of him. But there was as little of the schoolmaster in Thoreau as in Hartley Coleridge. He left Harvard without a diploma which, he told the authorities, was not worth the five dollars he was asked to pay for it. In 1843 he began the experiment of living by himself in a shanty near Walden Pond, some few miles from Concord, Mass. His craving for the open air was perhaps less symptomatic of a lover of Nature than of bodily disease. A consumptive man needs a sanatorium and a liberal diet, not a draughty and damp hut, and a diet of nuts and ill-cooked or uncooked vegetables. Add to this all too “plain living” an abundant exercise of mind and body in the observation and recording of Nature's secrets, and no wonder the man was worn out at the early age of forty-four, when he was just at the height of his power to see, to think, and to enjoy. But to turn from the man to his books; if you have no more interest in Nature than she has in you, if a minute and poetical enumeration of her beauties means nothing to you—I do not suggest you are any the worse for this—you had better begin with the volume of essays. You will be an exceptionally dull person if you do not find on every page thoughts that throw a new light on existence, and paradoxes that leave you amused or angry. I promise you that you will not have one dull quarter of an hour. Try the essay on “Civil Disobedience,” or the plea for John Brown, the tribute to the power of Carlyle. Read “Walking,” or “The Landlord,” if you prefer the flavour of the imaginative essay, the quality—albeit, with a Yankee twang—which you get in Hazlitt and Lamb. When you have got as much nutriment as you can digest out of the essays, go on to the other books; but make a point of never reading as a mere duty. It is better to read Mr. Garvice or Mr. Begbie with genuine enjoyment than it is to read Meredith or Mr. J. M. Robertson with a feeling that you are doing the right thing as a Free-thinker, while really you are just bored.

GEO. UNDERWOOD.

### Society News.

North London Branch.—On Sunday evening, owing to miserable weather, a small but very appreciative audience assembled to hear Mr. J. K. Harris's address on “Judaism and Christianity.” Next Sunday Mr. Saphin will open the

discussion: “Does the Solar Myth Explain the Bible?” This will be our last meeting in 1917. We re-open on January 6, 1918, and hope to continue until the end of March. We are very much gratified by the interest shown in our discussions and debates, and hope our friends will make them still more widely known. Our new syllabus will be ready next week, and I shall be delighted to send it to anyone forwarding me name and address.—H. V. LANE (Hon. Sec.), 29, Burton Street, King's Cross, W.C., 1.

Swansea Branch N. S. S.—The success of our autumn campaign has so pleased our members that they have decided on another “push” for the new year. The audiences throughout were good, and attentive. Little opposition was offered, which argues either “conversions” or the exercise of discretion. I take this opportunity of thanking all local friends and supporters for so well assisting in achieving the success attained. It is a source of joy and inspiration to all who are working in the front line, and has maintained the enthusiasm of members at a high level. We are looking forward to our next “offensive” with pleasurable excitement. We have made a good breach in the walls of pious Wales.—B. DUPRE (Hon. Sec.), 12 Short Street, Swansea.

South London Branch N. S. S.—On Sunday we were favoured with a thoughtful lecture on “Essential Christianity,” by Mr. F. A. Davies. Opposition was offered by a well-known Christian Evidence speaker, who, in the course of his opposition, threw out a challenge to a debate. Arrangements may be made to bring this about.—G. SHAMBROOK.

## Correspondence.

### GOD AND THE WAR.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “FREETHINKER.”

DEAR SIR,—In the *Freethinker* for November 25 there is a letter from Major C. Russell, in which he makes the following statement:—

The law of “The Struggle for Existence and Survival of the Fittest” rules the world, and so long as that law holds good, so long must we go on fighting, and shall continue to turn this fair world into a hell more awful than anything dreamt of by Dante (p. 749)

In the first place, this law no more “rules” the world than does any other law. Like all other so-called laws of nature, it is no more than a mental summary of processes which have been observed to go on in nature. If such a law, or if such processes, did “rule,” the world, I am afraid, there would be little hope for humanity in the direction of nations ever overcoming the habit of going to war in order to settle disputes. But it is a well-known fact that we can check and modify the processes of nature, and from that fact springs our hope of improvement in more than one direction. In the second place, as I pointed out some time ago in an article on “Biology, Economics, and War,” the “struggle for existence” does not necessarily mean that men *must* continue to fight each other in order to settle their international disputes. “Struggle for Existence” will no doubt continue in some form or other, until the end of the world; but there may come a time when men will realize that, in order to reach a high standard of development, they will have to cease fighting each other, and turn their energies more and more in the direction of the struggle between man and non-human nature. Then it will be possible for international warfare to cease, and possible for the struggle for human existence to take on a more elevating form than that of inter-human slaughter.

I would also like to remark that the “Survival of the Fittest” does not always mean the survival of the best. This is especially so in war. Many of the best sons of Europe have already gone under; many have been mentally or physically disabled for life.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

## THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—I should like to protest against half a dozen statements in Mr. G. O. Warren's article, "A Rich New World"—such, for instance, as:—

Thrift, being the greatest of virtues, is based on the fallacy, etc.

It is impossible to save wealth, because the moment any form of wealth is produced it must be consumed.

Any general attempt to save wealth would lead to general stagnation of trade and widespread misery.

The actual labour cost of thus (by book-keeping) financing the War should not have exceeded five millions annually.

The plain facts of existence prove each of the above statements to be utterly false. Then, further on, we find that our "artificial arrangements" are the cause of poverty, for "we see that there is not a single wild animal, if left alone by man, which cannot make a comfortable living." Here, in a single sentence, the proverbial tin hat is placed on the head of our devoted Darwin and all his followers, and Freethinkers are left without either God or Evolution.

Spencer advised the would-be sociologist to study biology; and the salient and universal law in the world of living things is the struggle for existence, due to the tendency to outstrip the means of subsistence. How few Freethinkers there are, however, with sufficient digestive apparatus to chuck up God, who really take the trouble to study Evolution from fundamental principles upwards.

It may be quite an arguable proposition that the nationalization of land and the abolition of a gold currency will bring about the millennium; but, in any case, such a theory cannot be bolstered up by misrepresenting ascertained biological truths. In conclusion, who is Mr. Arthur Kitson? He should write a short reply to Huxley's foolish essay on *The Struggle for Existence in Human Society*.

Meantime, we can be certain that, with a currency of gold, paper, brass, or none at all, so long as unrestricted multiplication goes on, the struggle will continue.

YOUNG COLQUHOUN.

## HELL FIRE.

Those persons who terrify the young with the fear of hell and purgatory do not often enough get a chance of hearing what is thought of them by decent people. It is the merest cant for anyone who defends Drummond or Moody to pretend to be shocked at the German Kaiser or Bernhardt. If there is any man on earth who deserves the punishment described by Dank of being shut up in a red-hot coffin for all eternity, it is the man who talks to boys and girls of seventeen about being "lost." There are still a great many such preachers, and millions of human beings are still terrorized by them.—*Extract from a letter to the "New Age."*

Religions have seized upon the metaphysical faculties of men, which they first of all lame by the early instilling of their dogmas, respecting which they taboo all free and unprejudiced expressions of opinion, so that free research respecting the most important and interesting of problems, respecting man's existence itself, is in part directly forbidden, in part indirectly hindered, being rendered subjectively well-nigh impossible by mutilation, and thus the most noble of man's faculties lies in fetters.—*Schopenhauer.*

## Obituary.

We regret to record the death of Mr. Charles Green, of 16 Balaam Street, Plaistow, E., which occurred on November 27, in the sixty-fourth year of his age. Mr. Green was a staunch Freethinker, who lived and died in the Secular faith. He was held in high esteem by all who knew him, and will be greatly missed as husband, father, and neighbour. He was buried at the East London Cemetery on Thursday, December 4, when a Secular Service was rendered at the grave-side, in the presence of sympathizing friends. We tender our sincere condolences to the bereaved family.—J. T. L.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

## LONDON.

## INDOOR.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, "Does the Solar Myth Explain the Bible?" Affirmative, E. C. Saphin. Open debate.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, near Oval Tube Station): 7, Miss Kough, "Freethought Women, and War."

## OUTDOOR.

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

## COUNTRY.

## INDOOR.

NEW MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick): T. F. Palmer, 3, "The Birth and Death of Worlds"; 6.30, "The Antiquity of Man."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, first floor): 6.30, R. Chapman, "The Life of Truth."

PROPAGANDIST LEAFLETS. New Issue. 1. *Christianity a Stupendous Failure*, J. T. Lloyd; 2. *Bible and Teetotalism*, J. M. Wheeler; 3. *Principles of Secularism*, C. Watts; 4. *Where Are Your Hospitals?* R. Ingersoll; 5. *Because the Bible Tells Me So*, W. P. Ball; 6. *Why Be Good?* G. W. Foote; 7. *The Massacre of the Innocents (God and the Air-Raid)*. C. Cohen. *The Parson's Creed*. Often the means of arresting attention and making new members. Price 9d. per hundred, post free 1s. Samples on receipt of stamped addressed envelope.—N. S. S. SECRETARY, 62 Farringdon Street, E.C. 4.

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## GERMAN CRIME AND SECULAR EDUCATION.

A Telling Exposure of the Falsehood that German Crime in the War is due to the lack of religious instruction, and a consequence of a system of Secular Education.

Every Freethinker should assist in the distribution of this Tract.

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