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Views and Opinions.

Buddhism and War.

In that most delightful of books, *The Soul of a People*, Mr. Fielding Hall describes the astonishment of English officers when the British forces invaded Burma. The country was seething with strife, soldiers were everywhere, and yet the Buddhist monks were going about their business as usual, “preaching of peace, not war, of kindness, not hatred, of pity, not revenge.” English officers looked and scoffed. If Buddhism had preached hatred to the invaders, had organized and fought, then Christian soldiers would have understood its value. As it did neither of these things they looked on it as not worth noticing. The reason for all this, as Mr. Hall explains, is that Buddhism is not an accommodating creed. It says “Thou shalt not kill,” and it means it. If the Burman fought, he did so because the call of his country came to him, and he felt it his duty to obey. But he was under no delusion. His priests told him that the unchangeable law—not of their making, but of nature—was that killing brought its inevitable consequence, and the law was the same for all. The priests said, “There is not one law for you and another for the foreigner; there is not one law for to-day and another for to-morrow.” “Buddhism is the unalterable law of righteousness, and cannot ally itself with evil.” And the result of this inflexible ethic is, says Mr. Hall, that Buddhism “has never bent to popular opinion, never made itself a tool in the hands of worldly passion..... No ravished country has ever borne witness to the prowess of the followers of the Buddha; no murdered men have poured out their blood on their hearthstones, killed in his name; no ruined women have cursed his name to high heaven. He and his faith are clean of the stain of blood.” Buddhists, says Mr. Hall, have fought, “but they have never fought in the name of their faith. They have never been able to prostitute its teachings to their own wants.” * * *

Mr. Lloyd George and the Churches.

That is a magnificent testimony to the ethical quality of Buddhism, and by one who knows Buddhists inti-

mately. And my mind recurred to the picture on reading Mr. Lloyd George's speech before the Free Church Council on March 13. Mr. George's avowed purpose was to gain the sympathy and help of the Churches—he even asked “reverently” for their prayers. The request may have been motived by policy or piety, and if the latter it would be only the latest of this quick-change artist's plans for winning the War. Still, one is fain to hope that the British case is not so desperate as to stand in dire need of prayer, which is always a bad indication. For men never pray for what they may secure by their own exertion. “God help me” is as sure an indication of helplessness as “God only knows” is of ignorance. But having come to the Churches for their prayers, the Prime Minister had to talk the language of piety. The War was to be kept a “Holy War,” which we may remind Mr. Lloyd George is the German name for *their* war, and we were to keep it so until “God wills that it shall come to an end.” So the duration of the War is dependent upon God's will. Its length is dependent upon him; and the responsibility for all the misery and slaughter is his. God is working out his plan, and the Free Church Council, and Mr. Lloyd George, and Lord Northcliffe, and Mr. Bottomley and the Kaiser are all instruments in his hands.

* * *

The Churches and the War.

Mr. Lloyd George told his hearers that the Free Churches had “nobly discharged” their obligations, and added that the Churches are “one and indivisible in this War.” This is not quite the fact, as some clergymen have been turned out of their pulpits, not, be it noted, because they opposed the War, but because they held that the pulpit was not the place from which to preach war—but it is as near the truth as one may expect a politician to get. On that line the Churches have everywhere—even in Germany—“nobly discharged their obligations.” For they have been as united in Germany as here, and, not only in this War, but in *all* wars. Can anyone recall a war in any part of Christendom in which the Churches of the nations engaged have not been substantially united? It is, indeed, part of the case against the Churches that whenever the nations have been on the verge of war, or engaged in war, the Churches have—to reverse Mr. Hall's statement of the Buddhists—preached not peace but war, not kindness but hatred, not pity but revenge. All their talk of love and brotherhood has been, to use Mr. George's own metaphor, “sounding brass and tinkling cymbals.” They have been powerful to arouse passion, and absolutely powerless or careless to allay that fear and passion upon which the War lives.

* * *

How the Churches Make for Peace!

Mr. Lloyd George said the Churches must see to it that “war shall henceforth be treated as a crime punishable by the law of nations.” Every sensible and every humane person will agree with that. War, as war, should be pilloried in the civilized world as the greatest of crimes, the greater because it is so largely impersonal

in origin and conduct. But contrast that with all we have heard from the Churches about war since 1914. Has the talk of men, such as the Bishop of London and Mr. R. J. Campbell, concerning the "spiritual uplift" of war, the "moral cleansing" it has given the nations, etc., done anything to make the people realize that war is a crime? The people are realizing it, soldiers are realizing it, but we have no reason to thank the clergy of any denomination for this result. If war is ever to be treated as a crime, it must be realized as a crime—a crime on the part of those who initiate it, a source of demoralization with even those who are forced into it. War and militarism cannot have one effect in Germany and another here. To those who read human nature aright, Germany is to Europe as the drunken helot was to the Spartan—a picture of what other people may become if subjected to the same discipline, and to the play of the same ideals. And when to the Church's praise of war, we add their shameful silence concerning the exploitation of the public as disclosed in the recent reports, to say nothing of exploitation in other directions, the case against the Churches is pretty well complete. The Prime Minister said: "There is less hunger in this land than there was when the first cannon-shot was fired. There is no privation." We believe that to be substantially correct. But what are we to make of a society which can only provide enough food for its members when engaged in war, and leaves hundreds of thousands on the verge of starvation while at peace? Does anyone need a more complete demonstration of the inefficiency or evil of Christian influence than that? * * *

The Crime of Christianity.

We do not blame the Churches for having failed to prevent this War. The indictment of the Churches, properly drawn, goes deeper and is much wider than that. The real crime of the Churches is that, having exerted so great an influence, the European War should be looked upon as a matter of course, and even hailed as a seed-plot of human virtue. Suppose the Christian Church in all ages had said, as the Buddhist teachers said, "War is evil, war is a crime. You may be forced into war in self-defence; you may be so placed between the claims of country and the teachings of morality that to hearken to one means to ignore the other, or it may be that the claims of country is so imperative that one must needs make war and take the consequences. Still, the consequences are there. Brutality and demoralization follow war as inevitably as night follows day, and nothing can break the principle of causation in the moral any more than in the physical world." Suppose the Christian Church had kept to this teaching generation after generation; suppose the Christian clergy had said further, "We do not say you must not defend your country, or that armies must not be raised; we only insist that the raising of armies and the blessing of war is not our work as priests. It is our task to uphold the claims of a common morality and a common humanity even in the midst of war." Had these things been done generation after generation, and century after century, does anyone doubt but that the general feeling about war would be very different to what it is? Christians might still have waged war, and our judgments on the justification of particular wars would still have displayed wide variations; but in that case we could have said, as Mr. Hall does of the Buddhists, Christians have fought, but they have never fought in the name of their faith; they have ever been able to prostitute the teachings of Christianity to their own wants. The standing indictment against Christianity, is that it has during the whole of its history done nothing to discourage war and much

to encourage it. To reverse Mr. Hall's statement of Buddhism, ravished countries have borne witness to the prowess of Christ; murdered men have poured out their blood on their hearthstones in the name of Christ; ruined women have cursed his name to High Heaven; tortures and outrages innumerable have been inflicted under the shadow of the cross, spoliation and wrong have flourished under its rule. The Christian convert is washed in the blood of Jesus; and that, truly, is a fitting symbol for a religion that has so often bathed in blood the countries of the world. CHAPMAN COHEN.

Flogging a Dead Horse?

SOME years ago, when the present writer had just delivered a lecture against the truth of orthodox Christianity, he was solemnly assured by a prominent representative of what is sometimes called progressive theology that the doctrines attacked had been abandoned by the Christian Church, and that Freethinkers generally were guilty of the absurdity of flogging a dead horse. As a matter of fact, the old orthodoxy still holds the field throughout Christendom. All departures from it endure only for a night and pass away, while the standard Creeds stay on throughout the ages. Comparatively liberal-minded clergymen often declare that Calvinism is dead; but those who go about with open eyes and ears know that, though slightly modified, it is alive to-day in many parts of the Western world. There are thousands of churches in our own land from whose pulpits it is being sedulously preached every Sunday. In a Welsh parish with which the writer is intimately familiar all the people, with one exception, attend church or chapel, and fully one half of them are Calvinists. They profess to be and are known as such. It is true that many of them do not know what Calvinism really stands for, their ignorance even of theology being profound; but multitudes superstitiously glory in it as the most logical system under the sun. To these Calvinism is absolutely true, and unbelievers in it are eternally damned. As to its logicity, there is not the shadow of a doubt. It is founded upon the invincible sovereignty of God. Paul calls God the Potter, and ourselves the clay upon which he works; and naturally the Potter has a perfect right to do whatever he likes with his own clay. Such is the logical defence of the doctrines of election and reprobation, of calling many and choosing a few. In the district already mentioned there is not one unbeliever, as even the gentleman who never darkens church or chapel door prides himself upon not being an Agnostic. All are believers; but what do they believe? A service recently attended will provide an adequate answer, so far as the Calvinists are concerned. The clergyman has been well trained in theology, and it was evident that his knowledge of his subject, from the theoretical point of view, was everything that could be desired. Indeed, it was as a technical theologian that he conducted the whole service; and although there was in himself a show of emotion, yet, judging by appearance, he signally failed to beget a corresponding feeling in the congregation. In point of fact, the service was an experience to endure, not to enjoy; the only item in the programme that was thoroughly alive being the singing, which from every point of view was a complete success.

To be entirely frank it must be admitted that the most conspicuous characteristic of the performance was its perfunctoriness. The prayer, which was long, was itself a discourse formerly addressed to the Deity, but clearly intended for those who heard it. Had there been a God listening to it, he would have been highly amused by the

strange portrait of himself which it contained, though he might have had some difficulty in recognizing himself in it. Repeatedly was he told, "Thou art this," "Thou art like that," "Thou canst do this miracle," or "Thou art prepared to show thyself thus." He was further informed that, apart from his beloved Son, even he could accomplish nothing. Mankind could be saved only by being washed in the blood of the Lamb. The text of the sermon was John xiv., 27, and its subject, "Christ's Gift of Peace to the World." For half an hour the preacher expounded the chapter in which the text occurred. Exegetically no fault could have been found with this piece of work, but it showed the utter aloofness from life of the perfunctory preacher. To him there was no incongruity in the statements that God is known only in Christ, that salvation is impossible except through faith in the crucified, and that eternal perdition awaits all unbelievers in the next world. "I am the way," said Jesus. "Yes," added the preacher; "and there is no other way; not even God can do anything for a lost sinner unless he approaches him by that one road." Prayer is always answered if it is offered up within the circle of Christ's name. In that name there is irresistible magic, and God readily grants everything asked for in accordance therewith. Here the preacher wholly ignored the facts of every day life.

After rambling about in that fashion, he at last stumbled against his text which, for twenty minutes, he reiterated dozens of times in slightly different words, without giving utterance to a single illuminating idea. Orthodox to the very core he was throughout, but not once did he exhibit the least sign that he understood or could solve one of life's puzzling problems. "This is a time of stress and storm," he said many times; "and nothing can restore harmonious calm but Christ's peace in the soul." To him the War meant nothing but the nations' sin come to an awful head; but, at any moment, God could sit upon this devastating flood and exclaim, "Peace, be still," and instantly there would be an end to the horrors of the battlefield; but it never occurred to him to inquire why, in that case, the brutal bloodshed is allowed to continue year after year. According to him, the Devil is responsible for the War, to whom the Kaiser, like Judas Iscariot, has sold himself. This is the Devil's own day, which makes him the happiest of all God's creatures; but the curious thing is that the Kaiser never mentions his real master, but is perpetually giving thanks to God for so constantly acting as the avowed ally of the German nation. One wonders whether the preacher verily believes that God can stop the War whenever he wishes, and whether, if he does, he is not sorely perplexed by the fact that the conflict is permitted to go on unchecked.

Sometimes the clergy declare, in the most dogmatic style, that there are no Atheists in the world, or that, at heart, all are believers in God; but the more we come in contact with Church and Chapel life, or the more carefully we study public worship as it is generally conducted, the more we wonder whether there are any genuine, whole-hearted believers in the land. Is it not a fact that the generality of people simply take it for granted that they believe? Browning's type of Christian experiences the greatest conceivable difficulty in believing, to whom, in fact, it is the hardest thing to be a follower of Christ; but Browning, in most of his dramatic pieces, deals with exceptional cases. To him, as an Agnostic, it was incredible that any thoughtful person should find it easy to believe in the Christian religion. But to those who possess any close acquaintance with ordinary human beings, there is nothing more patent than the fact that religion means but little to them, or, rather, means everything in a vague, nebulous,

and ineffectual sense. There are times when they are emotionally moved, when their apathy melts away, and religious ecstasy mounts the throne and reigns supreme for an hour or so. For the time being they are in the seventh heaven of delight, actually beside themselves with songfulness of heart. Such a state of elation or mental intoxication is generally induced in response to the impassioned appeals of gifted and well-trained pulpit orators, of whom the preacher we heard is not one; but it never lasts for more than a couple of hours, when they relapse into the normal state of indifference and lukewarmness. All the beliefs are always present in their minds, but, as a rule, in a quiescent, dormant, condition, although capable, any moment, of being quickened into a leaping, all-consuming flame of emotional life under the spell of an accomplished master of assemblies, of whom there seems to be a superabundance in the Principality of Wales. The Welsh are pre-eminently a poetical, emotional, people, and the majority of their preachers are skilful players upon the vibrant keys of their hearts. This explains the multiplicity of preaching meetings throughout the Principality, preaching being fully as popular there as racing is in England. The people are constitutionally in need of occasional sprées of some sort, and this is the species which most of them like best. This also explains why so many intellectual young Welshmen lose their faith under the influence of education at the various university colleges. At present what Wales needs above all else is, not a religious revival, of which she has had far too many for her good, but an intellectual awakening. Already, especially in South Wales, the new day of intellectual emancipation is at dawn, with the result that a few here and there, even in the North, are slowly rising out of the sleep of centuries into newness of mental life; and it is these brave, sturdy men and women who are destined to become the Saviours of the fair land of song. No wonder that so many clergymen are up in arms against what they describe as the anti-religious influence over thoughtful young people exerted by the university colleges. As yet Welsh Freethinkers are few in numbers, but they are sowing the seed, and there shall be a plentiful harvest in due time. They are casting the leaven into the meal, and, 'ere long, the whole lump will have undergone a complete transmutation.

Yes, the horse we are flogging is still alive, but its death-knell has been sounded, and its decease is at this moment an absolute certainty. For many long ages Scotland was the slave of superstition, but to-day Caledonia has its face towards freedom. Wales is still in bondage, but the bracing wind of liberty is beginning to blow upon her mountains, and even now the day of her release is to be seen laboriously climbing over the horizon.

J. T. LLOYD.

An Atheist Singer.

Poems and Ballads. 2 vols.; "Atalanta in Calydon"; "Songs before Sunrise"; "Tristram of Lyonesse." By Algernon Charles Swinburne. (Heinemann, 3s. 6d., net).

THE publication of these handsomely bound and well-printed volumes arouses mixed feelings. Had they been issued years ago at the same modest prices they would have helped to widen the reputation of a very great poet during his lifetime. As it is they will but increase the wreaths upon his tomb. For, by virtue of his splendid lyrical gifts, Algernon Charles Swinburne's best work remains amongst the brightest gems of English literature so rich in glorious genius and transcendent talent. Tennyson has told us that, when Byron died, it was as

though the firmament had lost a mighty star, in whose vanishing the world was left to chaos and night. Swinburne was more to us than Byron, for he had been a living glory of our state for half a century, and the star of his genius had wheeled so long and with such majesty that we had grown inured to his presence, and looked upon him as essential to the aspect of our heaven. So continuous was his influence that the intellectual life of our time runs in a channel largely of his making, and to ends that but for him had been shaped far other than they are.

A striking instance of the provincialism of the average English reader was the comparative unpopularity of Swinburne. Popularity, of course, may mean nothing or everything. It may be that of *The Rosary*, or of *The Messiah*, of *East Lynne*, or of *Don Quixote*. It may be absolutely damning, or the one incontestable proof of supreme merit. The tests are universality and endurance, for only noble work shall win and keep a lasting position. The best appeals in the long run to all, like *Hamlet*, though not in equal degree. Against clerical cliques, against furious opposition, by dint of sheer merit, Swinburne won his lasting place in art.

The greatest bar to Swinburne's popularity was that he sang Atheism, and made a clean sweep of supernaturalism. Shelley himself never sang with greater passion than Swinburne when he was arraigning Priestcraft at the Bar of Humanity. Just listen:—

Who gives a star and taketh a sun away :
 Who shapes the soul, and makes her a barren wife
 To the earthly body and grievous growth of clay ;
 Who turns the large limbs to a little flame,
 And binds the great sea with a little sand ;
 Who makes desire, and slays desire with shame ;
 Who shakes the heaven as ashes in his hand ;
 Who, seeing the light and shadow for the same,
 Bids day waste night as fire devours a brand,
 Smites without sword, and scourges without rod,——
 The supreme evil, God.

In another poem he sings:—

I that saw where ye trod
 The dim paths of the night
 Set the shadow called God
 In your skies to give light ;
 But the morning of manhood is risen, and
 the shadowless soul is in sight.

The "Hymn to Proserpine" represents a Pagan poet singing after the proclamation in Rome of Christianity, and Swinburne uses, ironically, the phrase ascribed, falsely, to the dying Julian the Apostate: "Thou hast conquered, Galilean":—

Thou hast conquered, O pale Galilean ; the world has grown
 gray with thy breath.
 We have drunken of things Lethean, and fed on the fulness of
 death.

O lips that the live blood faints in, the leavings of racks and
 rods !
 O ghastly glories of saints, dead limbs of gibbeted gods !
 Though all men abase them before you in spirit, and all knees
 bend,
 I kneel not neither adore you, but standing, look to the end.

He is equally outspoken in his "Lines Before a Crucifix":—

No soul that lived, loved, wrought, and died,
 Is this their carrion crucified.

Note the relentless questioning in the following lines addressed to Christ:—

The nineteenth wave of the ages rolls
 Now deathward since thy death and birth ;
 Hast thou fed full men's starved-out souls ?
 Hast thou brought Freedom upon earth ?
 Or are there less oppressions done
 In this wild world under the sun ?

Swinburne dips his pen in flame in his "Song in Time of Order":—

We have done with the kisses that sting,
 The thief's mouth red from the feast,
 The blood on the hands of the king,
 And the lie at the lips of the priest.

What fearful derision is expressed in the "Hymn of Man":—

O Thou the Lord God of our tyrants, they call thee, their
 God, by thy name.
 By thy name that in hell-fire was written, and burned at the
 point of thy sword,
 Thou art smitten, thou God, thou art smitten ; thy death is
 upon thee, O Lord.
 And the love-song of earth as thou diest resounds through the
 wind of her wings—
 Glory to Man in the Highest ! for man is the master of things.

Swinburne regarded prayer as folly, and he vents his scorn in music:—

Behold, there is no grief like this
 The barren blossom of thy prayer.
 Thou shalt find out how sweet it is.
 O fools and blind, what seek ye there,
 High up in the air ?
 Ye must have gods, the friends of men,
 Merciful gods, compassionate,
 And these shall answer you again,
 Will ye beat always at the gate,
 Ye fools of fate ?

For fifty years Swinburne expressed Freethought ideas in his poetry, and his consistency is proved from the publication of "Atalanta in Calydon," the work of his young manhood, to the august utterances of his later years. No one can doubt for an instant his passionate sincerity. Hear the lyrical cry which burst from him in his "Mater Triumphalis," one of the noblest and most profound poems in the English language:—

I am the trumpet at thy lips, thy clarion
 Full of thy life, sonorous with thy breath ;
 The grave of souls born worms and creeds grown carrion
 Thy blast of judgment fills with fires of death.

Thou art the player whose organ keys are thunders,
 And I beneath thy foot the pedal prest ;
 Thou art the ray whereat the rent night sunders,
 And I the cloudlet borne upon thy breast.

I shall burn up before thee, pass and perish,
 As haze in sunrise on the red sea-line ;
 But thou from dawn to sunset shalt cherish
 The thoughts that led and souls that lighted mine.

Shelley has told us that great poets are tried by a jury of their peers. Hear what George Meredith says of Swinburne: "Song was his natural voice. He was the greatest of our lyrical poets—of the world's, I should say, considering what a language he had to wield." What a tribute! And we gratefully remember that the greatest poet of our time was an avowed Freethinker, and that his genius was enkindled at the altar of Humanity, which was standing before any other was built, and will endure when every other has crumbled into dust.

MIMNERMUS.

Ecce Domine!

Oh thou who did'st in Israel's mind instill
 "Thou shalt not kill,"
 Oh thou who did'st devise for Abel slain
 The brand of Cain,

Behold thine own son's dying agony
 At thy decree ;
 Behold foredoomed Iscariot's shameful death
 Willed by thy breath !

G. H. BOSWORTH.

The Queen of Night.

III.

(Continued from p. 171.)

THE tides on a tide-disturbed planet tend to modify the motions of the planet in such a manner that the tides cease to ebb and flow. As a result of this, constant high tide would be experienced in some places, and permanent low tide would be established elsewhere. When a globe revolves too slowly, the tidal influences urge the body round, and thus effect this end. If, however, a globe rotates with excessive rapidity, then the tide operates as a brake, and reduces the speed of rotation until the requisite adjustment is reached. Our planet is at present revolving too quickly to permit the high tides to remain at permanent stations, with the consequence that the tides exert themselves in slowing down the rotation. But the earth is a body so large, and the tides raised by a small orb like the moon so insignificant, that their influences in retarding the rapidity of the earth's rotation are barely appreciable. Yet, if these powers are small, they indubitably exist, and there is no escape from the conclusion that their accumulating influences are slowly but surely decreasing the velocity of the earth's rotation.

From this it follows that the length of the terrestrial day is increasing. But so slow is this extension that in 1,000 years the difference amounts to a mere fraction of a second. Yet slight differences such as this accumulate in the course of ages, for the changes invariably proceed in one direction. In this respect they differ from the periodic departures which characterize various other phenomena. With these, an advance is succeeded by a retreat, until the original conditions are restored. But the expansion of the earth's day is constant. All that is essential to enable our day to double, or even treble, its present length, is the passage of sufficient time.

At least a hundred million years are demanded by biologists for the evolution of life on our earth; while the geologists require as many, or even more, for the deposition of the sedimentary strata. Throughout this prolonged period the tides have been labouring in their task of diminishing our planet's speed. If, therefore, in coming ages the day is destined to attain a far greater length than it now enjoys, so, in the grey past, the rapidity of our globe's rotation must have been materially greater than at present.

In the lapse of ages, fractions of seconds mount up to seconds; these expand to minutes, and minutes roll into hours. *Æons* ago, our planet spun round in twenty hours; at a period even more remote, we can imagine a time when its axial rotation was accomplished in the reduced space of ten hours. Peering still further back into the recesses of the past, we may picture a period long predating the dawn of life, or even the formation of the most ancient rocks, when the earth was revolving in a day of five hours, or less. Thus we learn that an uninterrupted tidal drag, persisting throughout geological, or even pre-geological epochs, has enormously lessened our planet's rotational speed, while distending the day from one of four or five hours' duration to that of its present length of twenty-four hours.

The orb of night has served to raise the earth's tides and to diminish its rotational rate. But in its turn the terrene sphere has reacted on the moon. The earth's surface is extensively covered with water, and the presence of this fluid mass permits the moon to steadily recede from the earth. Were the earth solid throughout, its influence on the moon would be greater than it is. Calculations based on the experiences of a few centuries would reveal no material change in the distance of the moon. Precise relations between the path pur-

sued by the moon and tidal influences are difficult to determine. Perturbations in the lunar orbit are very complicated, and these alone render any definite determinations extremely onerous.

But when we approach the problem from an astrophysical standpoint, certain conclusions become imperative. There can be no question that the earth's powers of reaction have, in the course of the ages which have elapsed since the genesis of the moon, constrained our satellite to travel in its contemporary orbit. And as we journey back in time, the nearer and nearer the moon is seen to approach her earth-mother. Much as we see the day decline as we travel backwards, so does the moon's distance from the earth diminish, until we reach a period when the two bodies were in contact. Far different must our planet and its satellite then have been to what they now are. The combined mass of the earth-moon system was then in a state of incandescence, while at a still earlier stage it must have been in a gaseous condition. Even after their separation into two distinct bodies, the nascent earth and moon were spinning round each other, the period of the evolving moon's rotation being determined by the time occupied by the revolution of the larger object, which subsequently became the earth. After the two bodies had established a complete separation, they continued to be attracted one by the other as if they were united by the firmest bonds. The very rapid rotation which characterized these bodies would account for this. Just as a grindstone, when driven with immense velocity, will fly into fragments, so did the earth and moon part company when centrifugal overcame centripetal force.

No further disruption seems likely in the case of the earth. Its present rotational speed is well within the limits of safety. The equatorial bulging of our globe, however, is the result of the adjustment of the form of our sphere to the requirements necessitated by its revolution. It is thought that the earth could revolve on its axis in twelve instead of twenty-four hours before reaching the critical stage at which disruption would occur. But were the earth's day reduced to a few hours only then the tension evolved by the excessively rapid rotation would speedily rupture our planet.

In the dim and distant past this state of tension arose, and the moon was duly delivered by her earth-mother. In this parting of parent and offspring the tidal power of the sun participated. The glowing mass of our planet cast away a large fragment, and the particles of this fragment as they cooled and contracted, arranged themselves into globular form, and thus arose the moon.

As previously stated, our satellite is slowly receding from us, and important as its tide-raising powers still are, they are insignificant in comparison with those exerted when the moon was a nearer neighbour to the earth. As the moon's tidal influences have dwindled during past ages, so they will continue to diminish through the approaching years. With the constant decrease of lunar tidal authority, our globe will turn more and more tardily on its axis. In the course of unspeakably remote stretches of future time our day will increase, not merely from twenty-four to thirty hours, but even to a period of two of our present days. Nor is this all. The earth's rotation will, in the passage of periods, still further remote, gradually so greatly lessen that the terrestrial day will ultimately equal, if not exceed, the period embraced by sixty of our present ephemeral days of a paltry twenty-four hours.

When the day has reached the length of 1,400 hours the moon's orbit will have widened, and its distance considerably increased. The lunar rotational period, as well as its period of orbital revolution, will have become

so greatly augmented that the day and the month will be of equal length, each comprising a period of 1,400 hours. In this transformed state of lunar and sub-lunar affairs, our earth will ceaselessly present the same face to the moon, much as that orb constantly turns the same surface towards the earth.

Without the least violation of well-established physical principles, the foregoing conclusions have been necessitated, chiefly through the researches of the late Sir George Darwin. Although relatively a body so small, the tides raised by the moon have ever tended to slacken the speed of the earth, so that eventually the two bodies must turn one surface only to each other. When this condition of affairs has been arrived at, lunar tides will rise and fall no longer. High planetary tides will prevail in some terrestrial localities and low tides in others, but the position of these tides will become stationary. High tides will always occur in one region and low tides at another. The moon will sail throughout the year in the same part of the sky. It will be visible to the inhabitants of one surface of the earth only, for the opposite face of our planet will never be presented to our satellite. If, in these far-off ages, earth-dwellers insane enough to engage in sanguinary strife still survive, the light of the moon will refuse its assistance to the nocturnal aerial invader on that hemisphere which is permanently turned from our satellite's beams. When the moon's tidal influences have ended, solar power will still continue to operate in generating tidal movements, and these will serve to further retard the axial rotation of the earth. Thus, the time will arrive when the earth's day will be longer than the month, which is now determined by the period occupied by the moon in its revolution round our globe.

A striking analogy of this is afforded by the motions of the Martian moons. Mars possesses two small satellites, and the one nearest to the ruddy planet presents similar features to those ultimately destined to prevail in the earth-moon system. Mars revolves in about twenty-four and a half hours, while its inner moon runs round its primary so rapidly that it accomplishes three journeys as the planet itself turns over once. Mars and his moons form a far smaller system than ours; but they display in miniature within the solar system itself, a contemporary picture of the relations which will reign in the terrestrial and lunar partnership in the unspeakable abysses of future time.

T. F. PALMER.

(To be concluded.)

Militarism, the Church, and the Education Bill.

WITHOUT being in the least pro-German, the *Freethinker* has consistently exposed the falsity of the clerical claim, so often made in the past, that Germany's misdeeds were due to her alleged Atheism. The historical connection between the teaching of religion in Germany and the building up of the militarist system on the basis of frightfulness has been again and again pointed out. But the Christian lie has served its purpose, and the time has now arrived, it would appear, for a complete *volte face* on the part of those who so industriously propagated it.

For the "knock-out blow" shows no signs yet of being delivered; and, with the emergence of the possibility of concluding a peace of compromise, rightly or wrongly it has been decided that the militarist system shall be firmly established in this country. In the absence of a great part of the electorate on various forms of national service, and a part which will to a large

extent be the fathers of the immediate future, a determined effort is being made to rush into law a new Education Bill. A novel method of furthering this object is the publication of anonymous advertisements¹ in the press, couched largely in terms of vague rhetoric, and urging the overworked portion of the community still left in the country, "For your own sake, your children's sake, your country's sake, do all you can to push through the Education Bill."

There is something suspicious about this sudden rhetorical fervour which challenges inquiry; and the disingenuous candour of style, so typical of similar advertisements of Whatyoumaycallit's backache pills, does not tend to allay the suspicion. In this, for instance: "Let us be honest and ask ourselves, while there is time, whether the democracy of this country is the best educated and the most morally disciplined democracy among the nations of the world?" The question answers itself by implication, just as the other advertisement will ask: "Are you quite sure that your symptoms, such as dizziness, headaches, quivering of the eyelids, etc., are not a sign of something more radically wrong?" Without giving a direct answer, both advertisements finish up by proclaiming the urgent and unailing remedy.

The purpose of this article is to point out the dangers of so-called "moral discipline." Having provided for compulsory attendance at continuation school up to the age of eighteen, the Bill goes on to provide that the local authority may compel young persons to attend for an additional two hours per day at a prescribed place for physical and social training, camps, centres, and equipments for which shall be provided. Some idea of what form this training is likely to take may be gathered from the organized movement now proceeding for establishing cadet corps in the schools throughout the country. These corps have been "recognized" by the War Office for some time, but the latest development is the extension of "recognition" to the Boys' Brigade as part of the cadet organization.

Moreover, no less a person than the Secretary for Scotland, speaking at a Boys' Brigade function on March 1: "hoped his presence might be taken as betokening the interest and approval with which His Majesty's Government regarded the great Boys' Brigade movement." (Has that any connection, by the way, with the movement which is also going on for raising these brigades in every chapel and church throughout the country?) He spoke of its religious, physical, and military training, and declared: "It was to the youth of the country that the Government looked for the success of the great task of reconstruction, and *he knew of no training and equipment better fitted* to enable them to carry out that task than that obtained in the Boys' Brigade." This should make fairly obvious what kind of moral discipline is referred to in the advertisement above quoted. The *Glasgow Herald* of March 1, in announcing the War Office recognition of the Boys' Brigade, said: "As recognized cadets, it is felt that the

¹ Since the above was written, further advertisements which have appeared state that copies may be obtained on request from the Tootal Broadhurst Lee Co., Ltd., Manchester. This firm is described by the *Daily News* (March 15) as "the big Manchester cotton firm," and the writer, presumably A. G. G., goes on to say: "Speaking personally, the present-day Lancashire employers are probably quite as liberal and enlightened as any similar body in the country. Some of them I know personally are very actively interested in reconstruction work and prepared to back their opinions, *as in this case*, without regard to personal loss." Which means that the innocent *Daily News* wishes its readers to believe that a big business firm is spending money, regardless of loss, on backing its opinions in regard to "moral discipline"! Whether this is the habit of business firms readers of the *Freethinker* may judge for themselves.

Brigade would then be in a stronger position to insist that the moral and social training of boys is as essential to the welfare of the nation as their physical development."

The officially-stated object of the Boys' Brigade is: "The advancement of Christ's Kingdom among boys, and the promotion of habits of Obedience, Reverence, Discipline, Self-respect, and all that tends towards a true Christian Manliness." And there we have it. This is the "great movement" upon which His Majesty's Government looks with interest and approval. Self-respect, be it noted, comes last in the list, based, as it must be, on the other (admirable?) qualities referred to.

The whole thing is nothing less than a design for the enslavement of the minds of the boys of the nation by the twin despots of Militarism and State-subsidized superstition. That it is being readily entered into by those facile and self-interested sycophants—the clergy—is just what one would expect. But whether the people of this country are going to allow themselves to be rushed into such an authentic replica of "Prussian Militarism" is yet to be seen.

Freethinkers, at any rate, should not deceive themselves as to what is afoot.

"P."

Acid Drops.

So many minor writers have turned religious for the period of the War, but they do not appear to improve the parlous condition of Christianity. Speaking at the City Temple, Mr. John Oxenham, the popular novelist, said "all this suffering is intended to turn us back to God." The idea is not new; but what sort of a Heavenly Father is Mr. Oxenham thinking of, when one remembers that the flower of the manhood of the world is arrayed for slaughter, and civilization itself threatened with disaster? Mr. Oxenham had better stick to his romantic love-stories.

In the course of the same address Mr. Oxenham said:—

If we had won the War two years ago, it would have been the worst thing that could have happened to us as a nation.

Interviewed later, Mr. Oxenham said he declined to withdraw a single word. We must get back to God, and presumably God is prolonging the War so that we may get there. This is quite "Providential," and illustrates the goodness and wisdom of the Christian deity. He permits thousands upon thousands to be killed all over Europe so that we may get back to God. And, presumably, he will keep the War on until we do. And, in that case, the War looks like lasting for ever, for the longer the War lasts the farther away from God people are getting.

The War is, in Mr. Oxenham's view, God's experiment in conversion. And a pretty job it is when one looks at it. For one must observe that all the killed are certainly not being brought back to God. They die as they have lived. At most the people who are benefited are those who are left alive. And if the War is being prolonged for our benefit, we do not see why Germany should be blamed. It is part of the divine plan. The worst thing that could have happened would have been the stopping of the War two years ago—and thus have prevented the sinking of hospital ships, and bombing of children, and women, and old men, and all the multiplied barbarities of the War. So thinks Mr. Oxenham. For we are getting back to God—*via* poison gas, and flame-throwers, and air-raids. Good God!

The new postmaster of Jerusalem is named Smith, and the Lord Chief Justice of England is named Isaacs. Curious, isn't it?

A hat belonging to Lord Jellicoe has been sold by auction for £125. Ecclesiastics will smile, for they know how to raise money on relics of people who never existed.

"At least a thousand babies per week could be saved from death if a Ministry of Health were established," said Dr. Saleeby at Whitfield's Tabernacle. This is not a compliment to "Our Heavenly Father," but the congregation allowed the remark to pass without protest.

Prebendary Bolton, vicar of St. Mary's, Lichfield, died whilst in Sunday-school. There is no moral.

The Vicar of St. George's, Wallsall, in resigning his living, says that "the congregation have been unworthy of the efforts put forth, manifesting a lack of earnest co-operation, loyalty, and response time and again. I have scarcely had the spirit to conduct the service." We fancy this gentleman's experience is not singular. And, quite seriously, nothing can be more serious to a simple-minded, honest clergyman, than to see his congregation dwindling through no fault of his own, and in spite of all his efforts. The less honest ones face the situation in a different spirit. And the *Freethinker* knows that the wails of the honest, and the trickery of the dishonest, are equally unavailing against a tendency that represents the impact of civilized thought on primitive superstition.

Soul-saving appears to be a profitable business. The evangelist, Gipsy Smith, has been received by the King at Buckingham Palace.

Invited to preach in the City Temple, London, the Rev. Conrad Noel has been forbidden by the Bishop of London. Apparently the Christian charity of Churchmen does not yet extend to Nonconformists.

The Roman Catholic Church exploited the death of John Redmond for all it was worth. Not only was a special service held at Westminster Cathedral, London, but at Wexford kneeling nuns lined the railway as the funeral train passed. Over 500 priests preceded the hearse on leaving the station. Poor, priest-ridden Ireland!

It is the hardest of all things to kill a superstition. No mental effort is needed for its reception, and once acquired it sticks. And, of course, if a man is a bit of a liar, the matter is all the easier. So we are not surprised to learn, from the *Montreal Daily Star*, that the "Angels of Mons" has turned up in Canada. The Rev. G. A. Kubrong, of St. John's Anglican Church, says he was in France and saw them. So did the Germans. There was St. George, and crowds of aerial cavalry charging the Germans. And as a final proof, when a party of soldiers was afterwards sent out to investigate, they could find no trace of the spiritual army. That settles it! But what a hard job it is for an ordinary liar to hold his own in these times of war! A pre-war liar is hopelessly outdistanced from the start. These late comers ought to be handicapped in some way.

Providence was too busy watching the fall of the sparrows to prevent the death of a Plumstead baby who was fatally burned through pulling the guard from the front of the fire.

Selina Smith, a Reading gipsy, was fined £5 for fortune-telling. There are 50,000 parsons in this country who tell people where they will "spend eternity," but these gentlemen are never fined.

Speaking at the Holborn "tank," the Bishop of London declared: "All my income is gone." The income of this elderly bachelor is £200 weekly, sufficient to keep fifty families in comfort. He should now be able to appreciate the blessings of poverty.

The *Daily Chronicle* declares that Dean Inge is "no longer a gloomy dean." Has he given up his belief in the "eternal fry of almost everybody born to die," as Byron describes it?

The late Mr. John Redmond's oratory was masterly, but he astonished the House of Commons once by a little lapse. During a debate he said: "I fancy I heard an honourable

member smile." This is not so good as the outburst of a Christian Evidence lecturer: "All creation shows the footprints of an Almighty hand."

The Annandale Presbytery is "up agin'" the Government. Owing to the refusal of the Government to allow petrol to be used for taking people to church, the "shame" and "hardship" existed of people not being able to get to church. The Rev. Mr. Atkinson wanted to know why, if petrol could be used for business purposes, it could not be used for church? Hear, hear! It is all a matter of business. All the same, we fancy the unfeeling Government will tell people they must walk to church, or stay away. Now the Presbytery had better pass a resolution pointing out that the reason why we don't win the War is due to the Government treatment of the Annandale Godites.

The matter has since been carried into Parliament. Mr. Gulland asked the President of the Board of Trade whether he would amend the motor spirit order so that a car might be used for conveying people to Church. The reply was—to use the stupid Parliamentary expression—in the negative. But the impudence of pietists knows no limit.

The following was overheard in a Barrow tram car by a correspondent: Child, watching train loads of 9'2 howitzers passing: "What are they, daddy?" Father: "Christian evidences."

The Lord Mayor of Cardiff called a prayer-meeting a few days ago to "intercede" for the success of the British arms in the coming great offensive. We understood that God was already on our side, and we hope the Lord Mayor is not under the impression that this one of our Allies is going back on us, or needs his memory jogging. But while these people were interceding, why on earth didn't they ask God to finish the whole job—and give him a time limit?

The Mayor of Swansea (Alderman Ben Jones), as reported in the *Cambria Daily Leader* for March 13, is of opinion that "if the people of the land had been more God-fearing the terrible calamity of war would not have happened." Had the Mayor forgotten that God is "a man of war," "the Lord mighty in battle," "the God of hosts," and that in olden times he led the armies of Israel in person? Is he not also aware that the pious Bishop of London calls the present War "a glorious day of God"?

Mr. Lloyd George grew quite flippant in one part of his address before the Free Church Council. There has he said "been only one successful Food Controller in the history of the world—the one who made five loaves and two fishes feed a multitude." We quite agree that this kind of a food controller would be of great service, and as Mr. Lloyd George believes that the Allies are carrying out God's will, it is about time the latter lent a hand in an unmistakable manner. But God does nothing when the doing is much needed.

Sir Hedworth Meux, M.P., knows more about ships and beer than theology. In the House of Commons he is reported to have said that Christ was the friend of publicans and sinners, using the word "publican" in the modern sense; whereas the New Testament word meant a tax-gatherer—then, as now, a much-hated person.

The Bishop of Exeter says "we must feel the deepest regret that, at a time when God's hand is heavy upon us, wicked men should presume to destroy Christian marriage." If his lordship reflects a little longer upon the matter, he will find that more harm has been done to "Christian marriage" by monks, priests, and nuns, than by all "wicked" people put together.

Oh, those "gentlemen of the press"! The *Evening Standard* (London) says: "The German is as the poles asunder from the other people of the earth. He has become

a Materialist egoist. His god is large and powerful and ruthless." When will pressmen learn that Materialists have no gods, large or small? They leave such playthings for the innocents of Fleet Street.

Cleopatra's Needle, on the Embankment, and the lions in Trafalgar Square, have been used for advertising purposes; but an American lady has surpassed this method of publicity. She glued a slip of paper on the bronze statue of Saint Peter in a church in Rome. The paper bore the inscription in English and Italian: "From the Teutonic plague, O Lord, deliver us." If this method of advertising becomes popular, General Elections in the future should be quite exhilarating affairs.

Mr. Joseph Hocking is writing some War articles for the *Daily Chronicle*. He has been at the Front, and is describing—what he would have described as well had he stayed at home. His article has too much of a standardized ring to be impressive. But in the course of his article he says that "A grey, grizzled, old major" said to him: "you can't go through the battle of Ypres without believing in Almighty." We think we could present that "grey, grizzled, old major with the names of some who went through the battle without believing in God, and who came out of it more convinced Atheists than they went in.

Said Dean Inge, as reported in the *Star* of March 13:—

As to the horrors of war through which we were now passing, it was necessary that the world should be convinced of sin. The experience was a terrible one, but other methods of raising humanity had been tried in vain.

We advise Dean Inge to open his eyes to the facts around him, not only in this country, but also in others, and then tell us what amount of elevation has resulted from the War thus far?

The *Herald* for last week published a report of a visit to the Front by one of the men invited to go out by the Government, Mr. R. Palmer, of the National Union of General Workers. Mr. Palmer says that in all his travels he only came across one man who was full of the martial desire to march to Berlin, and he was a chaplain in one of the hospitals.

Archdeacon K. F. Gibbs stated at Stevenage (Herts) that over 500 soldiers, who had been fighting at the Front, have applied to be trained for clergymen after the War. We can quite understand the longing for an easy job with nothing to think about, after all these men have gone through.

There is no doubt that Christianity does encourage feelings of love and brotherhood. The *Daily Express* of March 12 reports the Rev. C. A. Eaton, of Madras Avenue Church, N.Y., as saying: "When I stand before the judgment seat of the Almighty I want to be able to look my God in the face and tell him that I hit the Germans at least one good wallop before I shuffle off.....I say to 'Hell with the Germans!'" And in case a "German propagandist" is encountered Mr. Eaton advises "Hammer his face off. You have ropes here and steel girders. Use them." We hope, when Mr. Eaton does meet God Almighty, he will remind him of what a terrible blunder he made in creating the Germans.

Mr. James Muynon, the famous pill man, spent somewhere about half a million annually in advertising his wares. A great deal of this money was spent on religious newspapers, and this led an American journalist to say that "religious newspapers must take pills or die," others will see a fitness between quack medicines and quack theology.

Rev. David James, a Baptist minister of Swansea, was, on March 15, sentenced to eighteen months' imprisonment for sheep stealing, and his son to nine months. The skins of some of the missing sheep were found in the James' possession on their farm. Jesus said: "Feed my sheep," Rev. James, evidently, believed in collecting them.

Concerning the "Freethinker."

NEXT week, and until further notice, the *Freethinker* will consist of twelve pages instead of the usual sixteen.

For three and a half years of war we have held it unchanged in size and price, and had hoped to remain unchanged to the end. But the struggle gets keener each month, and the burden heavier. Paper is now about forty per cent. dearer than it was last year, and is increasingly difficult to get; while the almost certain prospect of the immediate future is a greater scarcity and a still higher price. If hard work or greater personal sacrifice would have obviated the alteration in the paper, we should have kept on in silence; but the end of the War is not in sight, and the change must be made.

Our aim has been to keep the loss on the paper at the figure it was last year, and although we shall be using henceforth twenty-five per cent. less paper, the actual cost per week will still be greater than it was during the past twelve months. Still, we are hopeful that when we make our annual statement, it will not be worse than the last one. It may even be better.

Most of our readers will be surprised that the change was not made earlier; we have held on to the very last moment. And we are quite sure that while no one will welcome the alteration, their devotion to and interest in the paper will in no degree be diminished.

Now for the brighter side. While there will be four pages, or two leaves, less in the paper, the reading matter will not be greatly diminished. The advertising space will be cut down. There will be more small and less large type used. Articles will be briefer, without any loss in value (contributors will please take the hint), and in this way the loss to the reader will be trifling. It will be more a saving of paper than a saving of matter.

Finally, everyone will be pleased to learn that the circulation of the paper is still moving upward. Last week we printed our largest number—and ran out of print. We could have sold more. Everywhere the paper is making new friends, and getting a firmer grip on old ones. No paper, I think, ever had a more devoted body of readers, and if adversity tries one's metal, it also discloses one's friends. These have worked well for the paper, and I know they will keep on working. New readers are still to be obtained, and we want all we can get. It is our ambition to make the power of the *Freethinker* commensurate with its value.

So, while we are diminishing our size, we have no anticipation of any decrease in usefulness. The *Freethinker* will remain the *Freethinker*, carrying its message of sanity and humanity wherever it penetrates. Through three and a half years of war our friends have helped us with ungrudging devotion to make the paper what it is. We feel certain that we can rely upon their support to the end. We value that support more than we can say. It has cast a silvery radiance on the darkest clouds, and has enabled us to face with a light heart the most difficult of situations.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Professional Mummery.

A "DYNAMITE" FUNERAL.

THERE were four "Fathers" in the funeral train
Of him who died—too suddenly for pain:
Four holy priests, explosive workers too
Who spend their time in proving false is true,
Though they have damped and damned it all too long.
Truth daily grows more "dangerously" strong;
Already it has got quite out of hand,
Explosions soon may shake the Holy Land.

ARDEER.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

March 24, Manchester; March 31, Pontycymmer; April 7, Glasgow; April 14, Liverpool; April 21, Goldthorpe; May 5, Abertillery.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—March 24, Leicester; April 28, Nuneaton.
- "FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—W. OWEN, 2s. 6d.; T. B. HUTTON, 2s. 6d.; Harry Shaw, 10s.
- W. OWEN.—Have acknowledged the subscription, but no P.O. was enclosed in your letter.
- G. T. WHITEHEAD.—Have sent your note on to the party concerned.
- A. RADLEY.—The letter contains the usual kind of statement, but, from our own experience, we do not think you are likely to get much "forrader." Whether you pursue the subject or not, is for you to decide. The writer of the letter seems quite honest, but, unfortunately, there is no necessary connection between honesty and accuracy.
- C. T. SHAW.—Pleased to learn that you hold the record in your town for *Freethinker*. Hope you will soon lose it, and that someone else will beat you, or at least try to do so. We feel sure you will welcome the attempt. Sorry we could not secure a copy of the pamphlet you required.
- G. A.—Three new readers in a fortnight is good work. Keep it up. There are thousands of them waiting, ready to be enlisted.
- H. TRUCKELL.—We had a paragraph written on the matter, but thanks for cutting. There is no fear of the paper shortage leading to the disappearance of the *Freethinker*, but it makes its continuance increasingly difficult—far more so than we ever anticipated.
- F. DRISCOLL.—There is nothing in the argument from causation. Causation is a statement of the relations between phenomena, it can have no meaning when applied to an assumed relation between phenomena as a whole and an assumed something beyond. For the argument from design we suggest your reading our *Deity and Design*.
- MR. H. LANDSBERG writes: "I have been a constant reader for some years now, and I take this opportunity of expressing the pleasure I have in the *Freethinker*. Though often I wish that its pages were open to subjects of an economic nature—since, after all, a half-starved stomach produces a half-starved mind, and you will understand this analogy—yet I have often thought that the liberation of humans from the yoke of religion and religious atmosphere will, by broadening the mind, help towards the advance in other directions. I have always endeavoured to spread the ideas of Freethought whenever and wherever possible, and have always tried to show that the exploitation of the mind by parsons is as criminal an act as the exploitation of the body by the capitalist."
- IGNOTUS.—Your letter reached us too late—Tuesday midday—for insertion this week. Shall appear in next issue.
- WILL Freethinkers in Hull who are willing to engage in organizing Freethought work please communicate with Mr. D. A. Macheson, 82 De La Pole Avenue, Hull? Years ago Freethought used to be active in Hull, and there is no reason why it should not be active once more.
- C. F. BUDGEN.—Thanks for suggestion *re* paper shortage. We rather fancy your informant confused payment to Chaplains with the Army and those near a camp to whose churches soldiers were ordered.
- A MEMBER of the N.S.S. Executive is at present home from the Front in a Lincoln hospital. He would be pleased to meet any Freethinker who would care to visit him. Will any who are so disposed please write Miss Vance, who will supply them with all particulars.
- A. J. MARRIOTT.—We hardly care to express an opinion in these columns of the policy of the papers or societies you name.
- 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.

Next Sunday (March 24) Mr. Cohen delivers two lectures at Manchester. This will close the Branch's winter campaign, which, we believe, has been very successful. We have every expectation of a good rally of friends and supporters, which will bring the season to a triumphant close. Mr. Cohen is taking for his evening subject "The Questions of Ignotus." This work, which was noted in these columns some weeks ago, has created considerable local interest, and a large meeting is anticipated, with also a lively discussion.

The *Bere Ferrers Parish Magazine* notes the death of Mr. Hugh Courtney Luttrell, late M.P. for Tavistock, and pays a high compliment to his character and influence. It points out that, "Religiously," Mr. Luttrell "was a professed Freethinker; religious forms, ceremonies, and beliefs did not appeal to him, as his last wishes indicated.....As a neighbour and employer he was consistently kind, gentlemanly, and genial.....He leaves a widow and six children. Mrs. Luttrell, who shared his views and ideas, is well known in the parish, where she has always visited the sick and the poor, and been a good friend to many in their need and sickness." Such a notice in a parish magazine speaks very highly for all concerned. We offer our sincere condolences to Mrs. Luttrell and family.

Mr. Lloyd had two good meetings, large and enthusiastic, at Abertillery, on Sunday last. He also addressed a meeting at Blaina, where Freethought propaganda is quite new. Here, again, the meeting was a great success. All of which verifies our opinion that the whole of South Wales is ripe for the harvest. To-day (March 24) Mr. Lloyd lectures at the Secular Hall, Leicester. There will, we are sure, be a good gathering of "saints" there.

The *Western Daily Mail* of March 11 reports an address by the Rev. C. W. Martin, in which the speaker fully endorsed all we have said concerning the unpopularity in the Army of Church Parade. He said: "By the majority of soldiers, both officers and men, padres were not wanted, and enforced Church parades were responsible for a good deal of feeling." The men, he says, don't want them, nor do the padres. If that last statement be accurate, the remedy should be easy of application. Our own information is that a compulsory Church parade is very often the result of a direct application from the chaplain.

In another column we publish a letter from an Atheist commanding officer on this subject that is of more than usual interest. The writer is in a position to speak with authority, and all he says bears out our information from other quarters. Meanwhile, we might suggest that if Freethinking soldiers would ask for exemption from Church parade, on the ground of being Freethinkers, it would often be granted. We feel sure that officers generally have no desire to force upon their men a duty which is repugnant to them, and the non-fulfilment of which in no way detracts from their value as soldiers.

Mr. T. F. Palmer delivers the closing lecture of the season at the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham, to-day (March 24), at 7 o'clock. His subject is "The Warfare Between Science and Religion." This is Mr. Palmer's first visit to Birmingham, and we hope all local friends will see that the theatre is well filled.

An attempt is being made to start a Branch of the N. S. S. in Portsmouth. Will all those who are interested in the matter be good enough to communicate with Mr. Norman Crosby, 118 Commercial Road, Portsmouth?

Tales of Our Times.

III.

LITTLE Dick and Willie, aged respectively ten and eight, having said their prayers and bidden nurse good-night, were reviewing the events of the day before falling asleep.

"What do you think Tommy Smith asked our teacher in Sunday-school to-day?" said Dick. "He asked her if God knew that Adam and Eve would disobey him when he told them not to eat any of those apples."

"And what did teacher say?" inquired Willie.

"She said that of course God knew it, because he knows everything that is going to happen. And then Tommy Smith said, if God knew they would eat the apples, how could they help eating them, because God can never make a mistake about what he knows."

"Of course he can't," said Willie, beginning to yawn a little.

"Then teacher said that Adam and Eve were not bound to eat the apples, because they had free will, and could do as they liked."

"That seems right too," said Willie, in a very sleepy voice.

"But Tommy didn't seem to think so—you know what an obstinate little beggar Tommy is. He answered back that what God knows will happen *must* happen, and so Adam and Eve *had* to eat those apples whether they had free will or not; so what was the use of ordering them not to? But teacher didn't explain anything more to him, but told him that little boys mustn't argue about things they don't understand.

Willie was too sleepy to make any reply to this, and so, unlike Milton's fallen angels "in wandering mazes lost" through discussing the same subject, the two little brains were soon lost in the healthy slumber of childhood.

Next day, on their way home from school, Dick and Willie had to pass old Farmer Jones' apple orchard. Over the wall could be seen the boughs laden with the golden fruit which had been the little boys' daily temptation for a week past. To-day the temptation was stronger than ever. That crusty old bachelor, Farmer Jones, was reputed to have "more money than he knew what to do with," so how could he miss a few apples? and how lovely those apples did look this morning, to be sure. No one was about, and it would be so easy to climb over the low wall and help themselves to just a few. One shake of that heavily laden bough would bring down more than sufficient to fill their pockets. And so, alas, Dick and Willie "fell" as easily as they expected the apples to do.

But, unfortunately, Farmer Jones and his head man on the farm happened to be not far off. They concealed themselves behind two trees as the boys climbed over the orchard wall, and emerged just as the marauders were about to pick up the treasure from the ground. So Dick soon found himself in the relentless grasp of Farmer Jones, while his man John held the collar of Willie's jacket in a grip of iron. And Farmer Jones had a cane too.

"Now, you young rascals," shouted Farmer Jones, angrily, "what have you got to say for yourselves?"

Dick was very white, but looked Farmer Jones squarely in the eye without any sign of cringing. Suddenly a flash of inspiration came to him—perhaps suggested by the apples. It seemed a forlorn hope, but was worth trying.

"Very sorry, sir," he said, "but we really couldn't help it. You see, God knew we were going to steal your apples, so we had to do it."

"God knew? What the Devil do you mean?" roared Farmer Jones.

"Well, sir, yesterday in Sunday-school our teacher told us that God knows everything that is going to happen. So, as our trying to steal your apples *has* happened, God knew it *would* happen, therefore it *must* have happened. So, of course, we couldn't help trying to steal your apples."

Now Farmer Jones, though undoubtedly a crusty old bachelor, was not altogether without a grim sort of humour, and before such a direct appeal to it his temper completely vanished, so he said encouragingly: "Quite right, my boy. I am glad to find that you have such a wise teacher in your Sunday-school. Of course God knew that you would come into my orchard after apples this morning, but it seems he knew more than that. He also knew that John and I would be here to catch you, and that I would give you a certain number of strokes with this cane of mine, which no doubt grew somewhere under his loving care in order to carry out this predestined purpose. Now, John," he added, glancing quizzically at his old factotum, "how many strokes with this cane do you think God knows I am going to give these youngsters?"

John, who was a kind-hearted old fellow, and had a little boy or two of his own, replied with a grin: "Well, sir, since you asks me, I be pretty sartain as God knows you ain't going to give 'em any strokes at all. These 'ere boys be fine gentlemanly little chaps, only they've bin led astray by that there Sunday-school teaching, Mr. Jones. God knows that they've never bin in this orchard afore (leastways I knows it for sure myself), and so God knows that you're just a-going to let 'em off with a warning this time, Mr. Jones, and to put 'em on their honour never to do this sort o' thing again."

"Well, John," observed Farmer Jones, gravely, relaxing his hold on Dick's arm, "I had no idea you were so completely in the confidence of the Almighty; but I suppose I must take your word for it. Look here, you youngsters, if I let you off this time will you promise me on your honour never to serve me such a low trick again?"

Dick and Willie, now quite free, and standing erect and manly side by side, took off their caps to Farmer Jones.

"Thank you very much, sir," said Dick. "We are very sorry, and will never do it again, Mr. Jones, honour bright. Willie, say that too."

"Very sorry, and never again, honour bright," shouted Willie, with shrill and convincing emphasis.

"That's right," said Farmer Jones, now actually laughing. "Shake hands, and here's an apple for each of you to ratify the bargain. John, let them out by the gate, please—*not* over the wall."

So Dick and Willie went off with a greatly improved opinion of Farmer Jones, but with grave doubts as to the practical utility of theological doctrines in the affairs of daily life.

A. E. MADDOCK.

New Testament Legends for Young Readers.

XI.—THE STONE ROLLED AWAY.

VERY early on Sunday morning, while twilight yet hung over Jerusalem, and Calvary, and the garden of Joseph, a group of women carried pots of ointment and funeral spices, and approached the rock tomb.

The stone block which had been propped up against the mouth of the sepulchre was rolled away. Bending down, and stepping gently into the shadowy cave, the

women were astonished not to find the body of the martyr.

What was to be done? To whom could they go for advice? Who could have taken the body away?

A light shone. Two shining ones appeared in the cave.

"Why do you seek the living man in this place of the dead?" asked the shining men. "He is not here. Remember that, when he was in Galilee, he told you he would be dead only three days."

The women hurried into the city, where people were just beginning to stir in the streets. They went to the house where the Eleven Delegates and other disciples met together each day, and they told the story of the shining men.

"Nonsense," said the eleven Apostles.

Peter,—he that heard the cock crow at the Friday dawn,—tore out, as fast as he could go, and rushed to Joseph's garden, crept into the sepulchre, and, stooping, found linen clothes wrapped in a bundle. That was all. He wondered, and went away, wondering.

On Sunday evening, two of the Galilee men walked along the country road from Jerusalem to a village, some seven miles away. They talked of the rock-tomb, the women, the shining men, and Peter.

"You seem very interested in something, my friends," said a strange voice. "Has anything unusual happened?"

A wayfarer had caught them up.

"Why, sir," said one, "have you not heard of the scenes in the Holy City?"

"What scenes?"

"The killing of the King of the Jews,—King Jesus. The Priests, and Lecturers, and Scribes arrested this noble pioneer of Nazareth, and the people demanded of Pilate that he should be crucified; and the terrible deed was done at Calvary last Friday. It was our belief that Jesus was the man chosen by Heaven to be the Saviour and King of Israel. And this very morning, some of our women comrades went to the rock-tomb where his body had been laid, and found the door-stone rolled away, and two angels appeared, and declared that the King was alive. He was indeed a Wonder-worker, Master of Demons, and a grand Preacher. And we wonder what it all means, and whether".....

"Dullards and slow-wits," said the stranger. "You forget that the Hebrew prophets long ago told that a Chosen Man should suffer a tragical death, and rise out of the gloom of the grave into glory and paradise."

As they walked, the stranger repeated many a verse from old songs, and hymns, and legends, which spoke of a Sufferer who should bear awful pains, and afterwards ride in triumph as a Leader, arrayed in glorious robes, comforting the people, and bringing joy to Jerusalem. Thus chatting, the three travellers reached the village. The stranger bade them good evening, and turned away.

"Sir," cried the two disciples, "abide with us; for the day is far spent, and dusk falls."

"Thank you," he said; and they all entered a cottage, and presently sat at a table, whereon a simple supper was prepared.

The stranger picked up the bread, said a blessing over it, broke it, and gave pieces to his two companions. In a moment, it flashed on them,—the memory of the Supper Table in the Holy City, the Supper of the Bread and Wine. They had scarcely said "Lord!" when he had vanished.

They jumped up, walked rapidly back to Jerusalem along the dark road, and hastened into the meeting-house of the Galileans.

"Comrades," shouted voices as the two men rushed in, "the Master's alive! Peter has seen him."

"So have we," exclaimed the two. "We met him on the road, invited him to supper, and".....

"Greetings to you all!" said a man, suddenly entering the room.

"A ghost!" shrieked the whole company, as they retreated before the newcomer, who looked like the Man of the Cross.

"Friends," he said, "don't be afraid. These hands," (and here he showed his hands) "which are holed by the Roman nails, are real hands; and my feet are real feet. Come and touch me. Give me food. Watch me eat."

Somebody gave him broiled fish, and a bowl of honey. They all stared as he ate. Then he spoke of the future.

"Stay here in the City," he said. "Never mind about Galilee. Stay here till the wonderful gift comes from high heaven,—the gift of the holy Pneuma,—it will come before many days have passed."

"And will the kingdom come?"

"Ah, it is not for you to know. Your business will be to go and tell the Christ-story to the citizens here, and the folk of Judea, and the Samaritans,"—

"The Samaritans!"

"Yes, my friends, the Kingdom is for them too, and it is for all the world."

He was talking in this same way when, not long afterwards, he led the band out of the city, across the mount where the olive groves grew, and to a very quiet spot, where he meant to say good-bye.

All of a sudden he rose in the air, and a cloud hid him from sight.

Two shining men stood on the hill-side.

"Galilee men," said the white figures, "the man that you have seen ascend will come back."

The Master of jinn had gone from the land into which he came as a babe some thirty years before.

The Eleven Apostles and the rest of the rustic company—simple folk all, none being learned, none able to lecture, none having any gift of words for making long prayers—returned to Jerusalem; and, day after day, they held their meetings of the Society of the Kingdom of Heaven.

Before long the marvellous Pneuma would arrive. The Pneuma—the gift—whatever could it be?

* * * *

In telling the legend of the holy sepulchre, I have passed from the God-spell, or God-Story of *Luke*, to the book called the *Acts of the Apostles*, written by the same person.

In the days of old, many nations had their stories of the Risen God.

The god Dionysus, who was the spirit of fruit-trees, the vine, etc., was supposed to die in the winter, and rise again in glory and bloom in the spring. His worshippers (ploughmen, harvesters, fruit-pickers) at one time tore a live goat, or bull, to pieces to show forth his death; but they also believed that the torn and dead Master could regain his life, and give fruit and corn to the hungry world.

Another Greek myth was that of the corn-seed, Persephone, who was taken down into the under-world by the dark King Hades, and there abode for months. In the spring-time she was allowed to rise from the earthen tomb and sprout into the green blades of growing corn, and so once again to see her dear Mother the Earth. We speak of this rising as the "Return of Persephone."

In Western Asia the god Tammuz, or Adonis, rose from the dead. One tale said he was born from the myrrh-tree, the bark of which burst, and forth came a lovely babe. He grows as corn grows, or as fruit grows, and is then ground to death in mill or press. In ancient festivals women carried an image of the dead god to the

sea, weeping as they went, and yet all the while believing he would rise in power and beauty; as, of course, he did.

Another such god was Attis, who bled to death under a pine-tree. People in Asia and in Rome kept his death in memory at spring-time (March), and rejoiced when priests opened a tomb and said that Attis was risen.

Egypt had its god Osiris, of whom folk told that he was god of the corn and vine, that his bad and gloomy brother slew him and cut the body in pieces, that the pieces were found and buried by the lady Isis, and she and her sister mourned for him. The gods put the broken body together again, Isis flapped her wings and fanned air into it, and Osiris lived again and became King of the World Below.¹

People who believed in the resurrection of the dead would easily believe in the rising of men to heaven.

The Greeks ended the story of the heroic Hercules with the legend of his ascension. Having been poisoned by some evil person, Hercules made his own pyre, or burning pile, laid himself upon it, and bade his armour-bearer set it alight. Smoke curled round the funeral pile, and the hero's body was consumed to ashes. Then his spirit, all glorious, leaped from the ashes, mounted a chariot which was drawn by four horses, and, amid peals of thunder, he ascended into high heaven. He had left to his armour-bearer, as a gift or keepsake, his marvellous bow. It was with arrows shot from this bow that many of the great captains of Troy City were slain, and thus the Greek army was aided in its war against the Trojans. Hercules was, of course, worshipped in temples as a Son of God.

And if you would know of Indians who ascended, you should read the tale of the prince and his dog—a very beautiful story too long to be repeated here.²

F. J. GOULD.

The Sabbath-Breakers.

A Sabbath well spent
Brings a week of content
And health for the toils of the morrow;
But a Sabbath profaned,
Whatsoever is gained,
Is a sure forerunner of sorrow.

So runs an infantile and quite admirable admonitory recollection. But we would not now confine it to the Sunday. Its application widens and deepens with the years. So the semi-superstitions of a crude and shallow theology may be turned to purer gold in the slow but certain crucible of a growing Humanism and Naturalism. The Church, with all its borrowed secular attractions, fails more and more to satisfy the growing mind of man. Nor is the mental process always slow. Paine, in the *Rights of Man*, makes the suggestion, and one peculiarly applicable to the present time, that—

The progress of time and circumstances which men assign to the accomplishment of great changes is too mechanical to measure the force of the mind and the rapidity of reflection by which revolutions are generated: Or, in the words of Keats' admired Chapman:—

There is a deep nick in Time's restless wheel
.....when which nick comes, it strikes.

Of which more anon. The Church failing me, and the Church having the monopoly of Sunday amusements in my semi-urban locality, there is nothing for it but to "break Sunday" in the open. Pleasure, like fame, oft comes unlooked for, if it come at all. My little Pagans

¹ All these legends are fully given in Frazer's *Golden Bough*.

² See Gould's *Youth's Noble Path* (Longmans), chapter entitled "The Prince with the Great Heart."

and me—my own tribe and a neighbour's son (the latter looks up to me as to a god, and with how little reason for his worship, *puir wee sowl!*)—took to the winding road; thence, by the brook, to a corner of the wood, where we built a fire and boiled tea. The firing and the feeding over, I, god-like, went apart and listened to the staccato shouts echoing in the trees. It was the anticipation of spring; it was summer. Already, in fancy, the genial dappled sunshine filled the glade; the primrose and the violet were come. The flowers of Free-thought seemed not far away. Here, and especially with these children, is a shrine and a sanctuary, an enlargement and an inspiration, a hope and a fulfilment. One may feel morbid, moody, or morose; but there's something here to charm those ills away. And, as N. P. Willis wrote:—

There's something in a noble boy,
A brave, freehearted, careless one,
With his unchecked, unbidden joy,
His dread of books, and love of fun;
With his sincere and ready smile,
Unshaded by a thought of guile,
And unexpressed by sadness,
That brings me to my childhood back,
As if I trod its very track
And felt its very gladness.....

And so half of the Sunday was well broken. I met with a comrade in the afternoon, and together we called at the house of a "hardened Atheist," and found this wicked person reading a handsome volume, entitled *Bygones Worth Remembering*, and which, with his spectacles, he laid aside as he rose to welcome us and take us "ben the room." A Christian could have done no more. A mute and modest-looking, but what proved to be a marvellous, gramophone stood in a corner. Our comrade, who is musical and knows it, was soon making free with his friend's "records," and nodding his head gently, and humming sagely and intimately, as the beautiful creations of Wagner, Beethoven, and Mascagni, preceded by the haunting "Barcarolle," filled the air with melody. There was sweetness and soothing in the Boat Song, passion in the Intermezzo, energy and daring in the multitudinous thunders of Wagner and Beethoven. The whole was as though one had been quaffing champagne. And then a woman's glorious voice awoke on the revolving disc, and memory and affection awakened with it, and wandered backward in the sweet old Scottish song:—

Hae ye min' o' lang lang syne
When the simmer days were fine
When the sun it shone far brighter
Than its ever done sin' syne.....

Where are those bright hearts now,
That were once so leal an' true?
Some hae left this troubled scene,
Some still are struggling thro';
But, tho' lang the night may seem,
They will sleep without a dream
Till they wauken-on-yon-bright-Sabbath-morning!

A pious wish, but a pardonable, and the sentiment is entirely human, and finds an echo in every breast—or gains in poignancy from the sub-conscious certainty that the "Sabbath" really means the Nevermore. When Miss Lizzie Hunter, of Glasgow, sung this song to a city audience just as the mechanical echoes reproduced it for us, that audience arose as one man, and cheered, and cheered, and cheered, and held the singer to the stage till her eyes overflowed with emotions happy tears. It was her masterpiece, or, at least, it was her listeners' master spell. In such a moment the mind leaps forward, despising every obstacle. Our comrade had been showing me the spot in this old-world village where, in the good old days, certain offenders were exposed to public shame and insult. I thought of

all the barbarities of the past, and of the lingering barbarisms of to-day, then hearing this love-song, and that boat song, and glimpsing the world of music and art in the great composers, it was not strange but inevitable that one should lean forward and say: Why, we are merely savages. Eighty per cent. of us do not know how to live. Our meagre lives explain our miserable religion, and our miserable religion explains our meagre lives. Christianity was the religion—the consolation if you like, of the miserable. Those who tell us of mansions in the skies would be better employed helping us to mansions, even decent cottages, here below, instead of fitting us to be angels in heaven, of equipping us to be decent citizens of earth. Instead of which we have: Blessed be ye poor, Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted—by-and-by! Anything, anywhere, but *here and now*; and mine host agreed.

It was the first Sunday in March, and, according to most *unreliable* rustic information, the crows on that day "lay the first twig" of their nests. The crow is a wise and reverend bird, but I don't suppose he is as partial to Sunday as his human brethren in black. It is more likely that "rustic labour," being more at leisure, merely *observed* Maitre Corbeau building on that day, and straightway gave his natural history notes to the world. In such wise even great religions have been built up. A great truth emerges from this trifling: all days are alike to every animal but man. He only has sought out inventions; and having found an imaginary God he must allot him an imaginary day.

Mister Crow is not such a damned fool.

ANDREW MILLAR.

Correspondence.

ARMY CHURCH PARADES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—You are quite right when you say that "compulsory attendance at church is felt as a real injustice in the Army." Officers *hate* it every bit as much as the men. We also know (those of us who have been through the "blood bath" in France) that religion does not help the soldier—quite the reverse, in fact! In the fighting in France during the whole of the War, I have only met with one actual case of cowardice (*i.e.*, real fear of death and terror of the task that faced us at the moment), and the man I have in mind groaned out his terror while he grovelled in prayer, to the intense disgust of his comrades, who were at this particular moment undergoing most frightful punishment at the hands (or guns and mortars) of the enemy. I knew the man well. The poor fellow was killed that day. He *had* religion—thoroughly! But he was the least useful man of my unit when the particular hour of tragedy and test came our way. I pointed the moral to my brother officers at the time. I hope to see religion completely divorced from the Army. It will mean a cleaner and happier soldier. I have served in the ranks of the old Army, and I know the amount of blasphemy the Church Parade always provoked. It is just the same to-day. But the Chaplain must justify his existence, and so this hated institution goes on.

Freethinkers and Atheists make fine soldiers. This is not a sophism; it is bed-rock truth. I find the right type of mind among them—the type of mind that is centred upon a high sense of duty and a complete devotion to the principle of fair-play. The true Freethinker makes a splendid officer or N.C.O. I've tested the value of this belief of mine, and I've not been let down yet. It would be interesting to know (though the bishops would find the knowledge very disquieting) the number of Freethinkers among the officers of the Army of to-day. As a matter of fact, more than fifty per cent. are sceptics—but more or less passively so. But at least eighty per cent. are convinced of the utter uselessness of religion in the Army. Church Parade is always

referred to as "divine punishment," and officers scheme more actively than the men to dodge it.

Please accept my congratulations on your wonderful show with the *Freethinker*. I hope that an early peace will help to remove the difficulties that now face you. But the time for peace is not yet. The present crowing attitude of Prussia, with Wilhelm as the chief chanticleer, does not help on the peace idea. Personally, I am devoted to the War with every fibre of my being and every breath of my body until the Prussian is stamped flat.

I must take up no more of your time. Cheerio and good luck.

AN ATHEIST COMMANDING OFFICER.

The Blank Wall.

X.

THERE is much boast these days of the influence of the scientific spirit in modern man. We are in the habit of assuming that superstition—at least of the cruder and more troglodite kind—no longer influences the brains of the people. We have hoped, and our hope has lent colour to the reformer within us, that humanity has made a fraction of headway in the forward line which we conceive to be Progress. But in this we are, as usual, mistaken! Superstition flourishes in the vast majority of minds to-day just as it did ten thousand years ago. The entirely rational and scientific mind does not yet exist.....Even a distinguished scientist like the late Dr. Alfred Russel Wallace believed in Spiritualism! Sir Oliver Lodge, another living scientist, is doing his very best in the interests of superstition.

Is the human race never to grow out of these things? Is the Rationalist a freak of Nature, and the superstitionist on the winning side? It may sound like rank blasphemy to suggest such a thing, but are not the facts obstinate? To-day we are in the midst of a universal and scientific war; yet humanity, in consequence, is behaving in a more barbaric fashion than when wars were less scientific! The primitive man with a sling was infinitely less scientific than the machine gunner of to-day, yet he was less barbaric. He was more humane. Poison gas, one of the most ghastly inventions of this War, is highly scientific, and at the same time inconceivably hellish in its barbarity. The ancient with his bow and arrow was clean and decent compared to the inventors of poison gas, yet he was more superstitious!

Nine people out of ten will avoid walking under a ladder, or spilling salt at table. Mascots manufactured by the million are still sold daily in Regent Street to the superstitious. The success of the famous "Swastika" charm was phenomenal. They may still be purchased in an attractive variety of forms!

ARTHUR F. THORN.

Society News.

The Manchester Branch held its second Social at the Downing Street Hall, on the 16th, and was a gratifying success. A flying whist drive was followed by a succession of songs, recitations, and dances, and no effort was spared to make the evening an enjoyable one. The talent willingly placed at its disposal augurs well for the success of the social side of the Branch in future. Thanks are due to Mr. and Mrs. Batt, Mrs. Pulman, and Mrs. Bayfield for the whist prizes which they so kindly provided. Will members please note that the Annual Meeting for election of officers, etc., for ensuing year, will take place at Bakers' Hall on Sunday, April 7, at 6.30, when a good attendance is specially requested.

North London Branch N. S. S.—The debate last Sunday on the question, "Is There a God?" was well sustained, the Secularists being neither vanquished nor disgraced. In view of the forthcoming legislation on this subject, we expect a large audience to-night to hear Mrs. Tiedeman, the Secretary of the Divorce Law Reform Union. A cordial invitation is given to those in opposition to break a lance with Mrs. Seaton Tiedeman.

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, Mrs. Seaton Tiedeman, "The Church and Divorce." Open Debate.

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

ABERTILLERY (Tillery Institute): "Keridon," 3, "The Lessons of the World-War: Industrial, Social, and Religious"; 6.30, "The Return of the Gnostic, or the New Epoch of God-making."

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. T. F. Palmer, "The Warfare between Science and Religion."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "Secularism and its Message to the Times."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "Some Curiosities of Christian Evidence"; 6.30, "Why Christianity is Doomed: An Answer to the Questions of Ignotus."

SHEFFIELD ETHICAL SOCIETY (Builders' Exchange, Cross Burgess Street): 6.30, Mr. G. E. Smith, "Dickens and his Characters." (Illustrated by Charcoal Sketches.)

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, first floor, Fowler Street): 6.30, "The Religion of George Eliot."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Dockers' Hall, High Street, Swansea): John Thomas, B.A., 3, "Robert Ingersoll—The Stalwart for Freedom of Thought"; 7, "Tom Paine—The Idol Smasher."

South Place Ethical Society,

SOUTH PLACE, MOORGATE STREET, E.C.

Sunday Morning Services.

March 24, at 11 o'clock—

JOSEPH McCABE.

"The Conscription of Wealth."

March 31—No Service.

WANTED.—*The New Moral World*, by Robert Owen, and other Works by the same author. Works by Richard Carlile and "Isis." Also *Freethinker's Text-Book*. Good prices given.—X., *Freethinker* Office.

HARRY BOULTER, Practical Tailor, has removed from Old Premises to 5 BRUNSWICK PLACE (Junction of East Road and City Road, N. 1; near Dawson's). All Freethinkers welcome. Moderate Prices.

To South African Residents, SETTLERS, AND TRAVELLERS.

READERS of the *Freethinker* and sympathisers with its cause will always be welcome to call on or correspond with the following;—

Names for the above list are requested, and will be published from time to time free of charge.

Contributions towards the expense of printing should be marked S. A. I. D.—i.e., South African Information Department.

Where to Obtain the "Freethinker."

The following is not a complete list of newsagents who supply the "Freethinker," and we shall be obliged for other addresses for publication. The "Freethinker" may be obtained on order from any newsagent or railway bookstall.

London.

- E.—E. T. Pendrill, 26 Bushfield St., Bishopsgate, M. Papier, 86 Commercial St. J. Knight & Co., 3 Ripple Rd., Barking. Messrs. Duncumb & Sons, 287 High St., Stratford.
- E.C.—W. S. Dexter, 6, Byward St. Rose & Co., 133 Clerkenwell Rd. Mr. Siveridge, 88 Fenchurch St. J. J. Jaques, 191 Old St.
- N.—C. Walker & Son, 84 Grove Rd., Holloway. Mr. Keogh, Seven Sisters Rd. (near Finsbury Park). Mr. West, New Rd., Lower Edmonton. T. Perry, 17 Fore St., Edmonton. H. Hampton, 80 Holloway Rd. E. S. Smith, 7 Turnpike Lane, Hornsey. E. J. Diffey, 44 Cheverton Rd., Whitehall Park. Risdon, 120 Tottenham Rd., Kingsland Rd. W. Bartlett, 23 Westbury Avenue, Wood Green. B. Ruderman, 5 Northwold Rd., Stoke Newington.
- N.W.—W. I. Tarbart, 316 Kentish Town Rd. W. Lloyd, 5 Falkland Rd., Kentish Town.
- S.E.—J. H. Killick, 1 Tyler St., East Greenwich. Mr. Clayton, High St., Woodside, South Norwood. W. T. Andrews, 35 Meetinghouse Lane, Peckham. B. Dean, Southwark Bridge. G. Lawrence, New Rd., Woolwich.
- S.W.—R. Offer, 58 Kenyon St., Fulham. A. Toleman, 54 Battersea Rise. A. Green, 29 Felsham Rd., Putney. F. Locke, 500 Fulham Rd. F. Lucas, 683 Fulham Rd. Mr. C. Smith, 12A Brewer St., Victoria Station.
- W.—Mr. Fox, 154 King St., Hammersmith. Mr. Harvey, 1 Becklow Rd., Shepherds Bush. Mr. Baker, Northfield Avenue, West Ealing. Thomas Dunbar, 82 Seaford Rd., West Ealing. H. Bright, 2 Edward St., Wardour St., Oxford St.
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