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Views and Opinions.

Advertising the Gospel.

One would have thought that the last thing the Churches needed advice upon was the subject of advertising. For they seem to have been always at it, and to be past-masters at the art. If a clergyman happens to be killed during an air-raid, there is a special paragraph in all the papers. If a chaplain is killed in France, extensive advertisement of the fact is assured. If a man who belongs to some dissenting sect is appointed to a Government office, the Nonconformists secure a paragraph in the public press giving full prominence to so important a fact. In the case of the Salvation Army, the advertising is more elaborate than with any other religious body. A favourite method here is to secure some obliging journalist and tell him all the good the Army does, and then reprint the supplied copy as independent testimony to the value of the Army's work. And the public reads without the slightest notion that what they are really getting is the Army's own puffing of its own activities. Nothing, in fact, is so well advertised as Christianity; and, as with many other shoddy things, to cease to advertise is to cease to live.

The Clergy at Work. * * *

We were, consequently, surprised to see the appearance of a volume on *Church Advertising*, published by Lippincott & Co., made up of nine articles by clergymen, and the remainder of the contributors being advertising agents, with one or two laymen thrown in. All the writers emphasize the value of advertising, and advocate that it shall be more effective. The newspaper men, naturally, emphasize the value of advertising—of course, quite disinterestedly. But parsons are wary birds, and one, the Rev. R. C. Keary, explains that the right way is to wait upon the editors and explain to them the number of members represented by the Church. The connection between this and newspaper sales is left unspoken, but it will be understood. The Rev. Christian F. Reisner explains that good audiences may be secured by some such methods as the following: A man had had seven acres of dahlias that were being ruined by the frost. He gave 800 to the Church, and one was given to each attendant. There was a very much advertised apple, and the agent agreed to give one to every person who attended. A Chicago baker was persuaded to give a loaf of bread to everyone who came

to Church, and this was given with the text: "I am the bread of life." Rev. P. B. Jenkins, Milwaukee, explains that among other advertising methods they adopt the plan of giving "Go to Church Sunday" buttons for men, and pins for women. Blotters for hotel writing-rooms with suitable advertisements. Ditto for school childrens' desks. Lead pencils for school children bearing the name of a Church, etc. We do not think that when it comes to advertising—particularly advertising on the cheap—that parsons have much to learn from newspaper men.

* * *

Some Hints for the Churches.

Altogether, though, this volume is a little disappointing. Considering that it hails from America it ought to have shown more enterprise. We really think that better and more effective titles might have been given them: "Preparedness in Religion," "Submarine Sins," "Short Cuts to Hell," and similar ones might have been suggested. In these days of War loans, meat scarcity, and food shortage, why not "Chops From the Lamb of God, Every Evening at 8, Free"? or "The Marriage Feast of Cana: Every Man His Own Brewer"? or "Jesus in the Wilderness: a Lesson in Economy, and a Tip to Those who Wish to Invest in War Loans"? or "The Miracle of the Loaves and Fishes: Every Man His Own Food Controller"? What is needed is a manual for the use of preachers with a selection of titles. There are already manuals which supply them with quotations, and "experiences" (which become their own by purchase), and texts. Why not titles? For Christianity really lives by and on advertisement. It is as constantly puffed as soaps or medicines, and the methods are strikingly similar. The familiar notice that the Gospel alone makes life endurable is identical in kind with that which declares the value of Carter's Liver Pills or Kutnow's Powder. The testimonials from pale people who have benefited from pink pills are substantially one with those affirming the good done by regular doses of the Gospel taken immediately after supper.

* * *

Pills and Piety.

Such an announcement as the following, for instance, may be read as a testimonial to a pill maker or a mission, just as one reads or omits the words enclosed in brackets: "Until I became acquainted with (the glorious Gospel of Christ) Blank's pills I did not know what an hour's peace meant. Life was dull, and without enjoyment. I was irritable and unkind to all around me. One day a friend gave me (an invitation to a mission service conducted by the converted Pentonville Pet) some of your pills. Without much faith I (attended the service) took them as directed. I had not (been long in the room) taken more than three doses before I was aware of a (change of heart) marked improvement. My (feeling of despair) pains disappeared. I felt a new man. Instead of a (taste for evil associations) distaste for food, I (sought for better companions) took my meals regularly, and did my work without fatigue. I would

not now be without (the Gospel) your pills for worlds. (It has) They have made a new man of me, and I (am now an earnest worker for Christ) have recommended them to all my friends."

"Spool."

* * *

The sober truth is that the position of Christianity to-day is almost entirely due to advertising. We have heard men, whose sole literary provender appeared to be the *Daily Mail*, talk about the *literary* beauties of the Bible. Others talk glibly about the immense benefits conferred upon the world by Christianity, or the superiority of Jesus to all other world-teachers. Quite clearly, they *know* nothing whatever about these matters. They are simply repeating the advertisement distributed so lavishly by the Churches. Every business man knows that in advertising the whole thing is repetition. Keep on saying the same thing often enough, and suggestion does its work. And this advertising of Christianity has been carried on for centuries. It has been worked into school-books and nursery rhymes. Advertisements of Christianity have been cunningly inserted into sober works on history and solemn essays on philosophy. And, unlike the ordinary business man, the Churches have had the inestimable benefit of being able to suppress advertisements of would-be competitors. They have had the monopoly of the finest hoardings in the country—Parliament, the Law Courts, Local Councils, etc. No business in the world has ever been so advertised as Christianity has been. A mere fraction of it would have made a multi-millionaire of the greatest quack that ever lived. And the public has been compelled to find the money for all the "puffing."

* * *

The Limits of Advertising.

But in spite of this extensive puffing, the business is to-day anything but flourishing. New business can no longer be completely suppressed, and old customers are wandering into rival establishments. New tastes are developing, and the clergy are in the awkward position that, while they can vary the advertisement, they cannot secure a new class of goods. And that makes the situation more awkward still. For the difficulty with a quack article is that, while you may build up a big business by extensive advertising, you cannot maintain it with old customers. New ones must be continually found. As Abraham Lincoln said, while *some* people may be fooled all the time, *all* the people can't be fooled all the time. For generations the clergy overcame this difficulty—and still do so to a considerable extent—by breeding customers for their wares. Children were brought up with a carefully cultivated taste for the goods supplied by religious houses. But now this source of supply is beginning to fail. The close market can no longer be maintained. Competitors are coming along, and they affect the young as well as the old. And really free competition is finally fatal to all impostures. Place the clergy and their wares in an open market, and their occupation will soon be a thing of the past.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

A New-Old Argument for Atheism.

PRINCIPAL P. T. FORSYTH, M.A., D.D., states in his exceptionally clever book, entitled *The Justification of God*, that "the only vindication of God is God." It must be admitted, at the outset, that if the Almighty does not defend his character, no one else can do it for him. In the Preface, Dr. Forsyth makes the fundamental concession that God does not at any time demonstrate the truth of his justice, but contents himself with saving man from doubting it. Now, the existence of

evil is a fact which cannot be denied. Its malign power is to be felt at every turn. The theologians call it sin, and Dr. Forsyth speaks of the victory over it "as costing God his life." It stands to reason, of course, that "if God could be abolished there could have been no real God." There is, therefore, an issue between evil and God which we have no choice but to characterize as the sharpest, in fact the absolute, issue of the Universe. This crucial issue the author describes in the following forcible language:—

Sin is the death of God. Die, sin must, or God. Its nature is to go on from indifference to absolute hostility and malignity to the holy; and one must go down. There is no compromise between the holy and the sinful when the issue is seen from the height of heaven to the depth of hell, and followed into the uttermost parts of the soul. And that is the nature of the issue as it is set in the Cross of Christ. It is the eternal holiness in conflict for its life. In the Son of God the whole being of God is staked upon this issue, and his whole campaign with the world; it is not one battle alone; nor is the sin he met but one of many foes. In the conflict the righteousness of God is either secured or lost to the world for ever. It is a question of a final salvation both for man and for God. God there must "save his word," which is his kingdom, which is his Godhead; else the realm of Satan takes its place in control of the world (pp. 151-2).

After all, that is not a fair statement of the all-important issue. The sentence, "Die, sin must, or God," conveys an entirely erroneous impression. Our contention is that the existence of evil disproves that of God, for, as the Principal says, "sin is the death of God," or, rather, of the belief in God. Evil and God cannot possibly co-exist even for a moment. Not only "die, sin must, or God," but the very fact of sin shows clearly that there is no God to die. Like all the smaller men, Dr. Forsyth evades the real problem at issue by an act of moral as well as logical cowardice. He pictures God as the author of two creations, the first and the second. The first, on its moral side, was so constructed that it was liable at any minute to go wrong. As the author says: "There was never such a fateful experiment as when God trusted man with freedom." The Creator ran a tremendous risk when he endowed man with a faulty nature, in possession of which he could choose either good or evil; but, according to the Principal, it was a risk well worth running:—

Our Christian faith is that he well knew what he was about. He did not do that as a mere adventure, not without knowing that he had the power to remedy any abuse of it that might occur, and to do this by a new creation more mighty, marvellous, and mysterious than the first. He had means to emancipate even freedom, to convert moral freedom, even in its ruin, into spiritual. If the first creation drew on his might, the second taxed his all-might. It revealed his power as moral majesty, as holy omnipotence, most chiefly shown in the mercy that redeems and reconciles. To redeem creation is a more creative act than it was to create it. It is the last thing omnipotence could do.....It is no slack knot that the Saviour has to undo. All the energy of a perverse world in its created freedom pulled on the tangle to tighten it. And its undoing has given the supreme form to all God's dealing with the world. But at the same time the snarl is not beyond being untied. Man is born to be redeemed. The final key to the first creation is the second; and the first was done with the second in view. If moral freedom is the crown of the first creation, spiritual, holy freedom is the goal of moral; and it is the gift in the second creation. The first creation was the prophecy of the second; the second was the first tragically "arrived" (pp. 125-6).

Such is the God worshipped and preached by Dr. Forsyth, a being who culpably trifles with himself and

his universe, whom to know is to despise. He created man in the foreknowledge that man so made would inevitably degenerate into a disgraceful wreck—into a howling reproach to his Maker; but he did so on purpose, designedly, and fully aware that he was thereby casting a dark cloud upon his name. By itself the first creation was highly discreditable to him, in face of which no justification of him would be possible. As a matter of fact, every philosophical theodicy ever attempted must be pronounced a logical failure. God's complete justification is to be found only in the fulfilment of the first creation in the second. In other words, the Cross of Christ represents the powers of the second creation retrieving, or more than making up for, all the losses incurred in consequence of the first. The moral resource inherent in the Creator was "put forth in Christ—in his overcoming of the world on the Cross, and his new creation of it in the Spirit." "The great goal is not the mere fruitage of the first creation, but another creation more creative still." Thus, by the Cross, are saved both God's reputation and man's immortal soul. "Man is only saved by God's holiness, by the tragic action of a holy God, by the honour done by God in Christ to his own holy name and purpose.....His justification of man is only possible by a practical justification of himself."

Such is Principal Forsyth's theory; but it completely breaks down when confronted by the facts of life. Instead of justifying God it annihilates him. If "die, sin must, or God," it follows that, sin being still very much alive, God must have died; but, on the author's own showing, "if God could be abolished there could have been no real God." Dr. Forsyth has thus furnished us with the most cogent of all arguments for the non-existence of a Supreme Being. With evil rampant everywhere, especially just now in the heart of Christendom, who has the hardihood to declare that an all-good and all-loving Deity sitteth as king for ever? It is doubtless true that the War, "the present cataclysm, is an acute condensation of what has been going on in Nature, human and other, for millenniums"; and it may be pertinent for a divine to ask, "if faith could survive that, need it succumb to this?" But the real point is that the faith of multitudes for generations could not survive *that*, and that to-day thousands more are by *this* brought, for the first time, to realize the true significance of *that*, with the result that faith vanishes never to return. The War is acting simply as a marvellous eye-opener to myriads, who either have lost or are surely losing their belief in God. The Cross, like Providence, is fast becoming a thing of the past.

J. T. LLOYD.

Charles Lamb: Humanist.

His graceful and lovely nature can hardly find expression in any form without giving pleasure to others.—*Oliver Wendell Holmes.*

The most delightful, the most provoking, the most witty and sensible of men. He always made the best pun and the best remark in the course of the evening.—*William Hazlitt.*

CHARLES LAMB is the most lovable of writers, and, despite his own quaint jest that he wrote for antiquity, he becomes every year a more popular author with posterity. "A fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy," it could hardly be otherwise, for much that he writes awakens a sense of personal affection in the reader. Writing of youth, of death, of familiar faces, of homely things, he keeps marvellously close to life. It was, we feel, just so with us in childhood, at school, in this sad or glad experience. This power, together with the humanist temperament of getting at the heart of things, makes him keenly alive to life.

As a man, Charles Lamb was well worth knowing. What would it not be worth to have had a few hours of his company? In his buoyant humour, or in his more serious vein, it was all one. Suppose we could have dined with him that day when the dish was the sucking-pig that Farmer Collier sent him, and heard the good wishes wafted to the giver:—

May your granaries be full, and your rats empty, and your chickens plump, and your envious neighbours lean, and your labourers busy, and you as idle and as happy as the days are long.

Or imagine we had been present when the stately and eloquent Coleridge asked him, "Charles, did you ever hear me preach?" and he replied in his amusing way, "I never heard you do anything else." Or what if we had taken a hand at whist when Martin Burney was his partner, and he called out, "Martin, if dirt were trumps, what a hand you'd have." Or, better still, had we been with him that Saturday night when he brought home the folio volume of Beaumont and Fletcher's *Plays* that he had coveted for weeks, while he had saved the price of it, and he could not think of going to bed till the loose leaves had been pasted in, and he had read his favourite passages. Or, best of all, had we been among those to whom his door was open on the famous Wednesday evenings in the Inner Temple Lane. Wordsworth was one of the number when he was in town, and Coleridge, Haydon, Hazlitt, Barry Cornwall, and Talfourd. Surrounded by such a galaxy of genius, it must have been a rich memory, an abiding delight, to have been with Lamb at times like these. It must have been a festal evening such as those ever-memorable nights at Frederick the Great's palace, when the nimble wit of Voltaire challenged the best brains of Europe, or those suppers at the "Mermaid," when rare Ben Jonson exchanged quips and cranks with the smiling Shakespeare, and the brilliant Elizabethan wits made the night merry with their jests.

The austere Thomas Carlyle was one of the very few men of note who misunderstood Lamb. Carlyle's seriousness, his want of humour, his dogmatism, shut the doors of sympathy. When they met the atmosphere was electric. On one occasion, while they were waiting for their host, Carlyle looked out of the window, watching the flight of some pigeons. Lamb, hurt, perhaps, at his silence, went up to him, and asked: "Mr. Carlyle, are you a poulterer?" Another time, as they were together in the hall, preparing to leave a party after the sage had monopolized the conversation, Lamb handed Carlyle his wide-awake hat with the remark: "Is this your turban?" Accordingly, we find the philosopher writing in his journal: "Charles Lamb I sincerely believe to be in some considerable degree insane! A more pitiful, rickety, gasping, staggering, stammering tomfool I do not know." Carlyle was as completely wrong with regard to Lamb as he was in error concerning Henri Heine, Voltaire, and Herbert Spencer. Lamb's jests often contained shrewd observation, as in his ironic expression of regret that the Royalists did not hang John Milton, for then we might have laughed at them.

Other men of genius who knew Lamb realized his real worth. They saw the good nature under the uncouth exterior. Lamb earned his own living, paid his own way, was the helper, not the helped; a man who was beholden to no one, a shrewd man, capable of advice, strong in counsel. He was ever ready both with sympathy and help, generous and unselfish. He had pensioners on his bounty, among whom were an old teacher of his own, and a cripple whose only claim was that he was recommended by his friend, Southey. Barry Cornwall tells a characteristic story. He was in Lamb's company one day, in low spirits, which Lamb thought due to want of

money. Turning suddenly, Lamb said: "My dear boy, I have a quantity of useless things, including a hundred pounds in my desk, that I don't know what to do with. Take it."

Lamb was a hero, modest, and unobtrusive. There was a taint of insanity in the family, and Lamb never married. What this meant to him may be guessed from the pathetic pages of his essay—*Dream Children*. His sister, Mary, killed her mother in a fit of frenzy. A few weeks' restraint restored her to her right mind, but the disease recurred at intervals ever afterwards, and a retreat was provided in a private asylum. There was warning of their coming, and a friend has related how he met the brother and sister at such a time, walking hand-in-hand across the fields to the asylum, both in tears.

If Charles Lamb waged an unequal war against fate, he was, at least, a happy soldier. When his turn came he yielded up his broken, but not dishonoured, sword to fate, the conqueror, with a brave and a humble heart:—

What good is like to this,
To do worthy the writing, and to write
Worthy the reading and the world's delight?

MIMNERMUS.

Materialism.

III.

(Concluded from p. 281.)

THE nerve-cells of the brain, at least so far as those of the cerebrum are concerned, which are arranged in a convoluted structure of grey matter, constitute the organs of consciousness. They are connected with each other by numerous nerve-fibres, and thus, under normal circumstances, is made possible the harmonious working of sensory and motor centres.

We have no evidence that it is possible for consciousness—including thought, feeling, volition—to take place in the absence of a nervous system of some kind; while there is evidence in support of the conclusion that consciousness is a mode of motion, which becomes manifest when a material brain functions. In support of this, we may mention that the stimulation of an end-organ must be transmitted to the brain, in order that we may become conscious of it. As a result of mental activity, there is an increase in the circulation of the blood within the brain, which means that material elements are being used up while we are thinking. Along with this, there goes on an increase in the wasting of nerve-cells. And our consciousness may be interrupted, or destroyed, when the brain is injured, or when the supply of blood to the brain becomes greatly increased or decreased. In fact, imperfect development of the brain, with regard to what we might call the harmonious formation of its internal physiological structure, will mean relative imperfection in its thinking. That is, if we could take the brain of a man who has lived in a given environment and attained a certain degree of thinking; and if we were to notice its various imperfections of a serious nature with regard to blood-supply, the formation of convolutions, and the arrangement of nerve-fibres and nerve-cells, we might justly conclude that the thinking capacity of that brain would have been greater had it developed without those imperfections. The same environment is to be presupposed when we think of the brain in question in its imperfect state, and in its state of better development, so as to have it under the same influences in each state.

The process by which consciousness, whether as thought, emotion, or volition, is made possible, may be described in the following manner. Impressions of

objects of the outer world are made upon the end-organs of the nerve-fibres, and the latter transmit the impressions to the sensory-cells of the brain, from whence they pass, by means of inter-connecting nerves, to the motor-cells. Rearrangements of the molecules of the grey matter of the brain take place, and the result is thought, emotion, or volition; or, perhaps, all three combined. Various degrees of complexity in the process are possible; but I am more concerned with the fact that the result from this process is due to the functioning of a material organism. To explain consciousness, as some would have us do, is an impossibility at the present time; and Materialists are content with describing the processes by which it is made possible. And the processes are such that we are led to form the conclusion that consciousness is motion manifesting itself in a peculiar way, and that this mode of motion is bound up with a certain kind of highly sensitive matter. This, of course, eliminates the idea of a soul, or a mind, capable of living apart from, or of existing as a distinct being within, a material body. If the term "soul" is to be used at all, it should only be used as an abstraction, denoting the total psychic activity of the nervous system.

One of the greatest mistakes that is made when the mind, or consciousness, is spoken of, is that of assuming it to be a fixed quantity, as it were. Consciousness, as a matter of fact, is subject to a great deal of variation. A man's consciousness is not the same to-day as it was yesterday. This is quite natural, and only to be expected, because our environment is, to some degree, ever changing, even when we are not moving from one environment to another of totally different make-up. Consequently, the impressions transmitted by the nerves from the outer world to the brain are of untold variety, and, as a result of this, consciousness cannot be otherwise than subject to variations with regard to contents and intensity. In the course of years, a man's mental outlook may be so greatly changed that what were objects of delight and interest when he was twenty, have become distasteful to him at the age of thirty. He may have learned to prefer the opera to the music-hall, science rather than fiction; and paintings, which he once thought works of art, may now appeal to him as being mere attempts at the production of something artistic. Or the change may have been for the worse. In either case it goes to prove what the Materialist believes, that mind is a purely national product of evolution.

Here, we can only briefly discuss Materialism in relation to Morality and Humanism. Materialism is directly opposed to the belief that morality is of divine origin, and that this life should be a preparation for a new life, after death.

As there is no evidence that man has an immortal soul, it is a fundamental principle of Materialism that we should spend our strength in trying to make this life better and happier, without troubling about a future life.

Morality is a product of the evolution of human society. It is that relationship which exists between man and man, when their actions toward each other tend to bring about their well-being and happiness. By a very slow process of evolution, men have learned that if they are to live together in society, and enjoy each other's company, they must acknowledge and perform certain actions, which have come to be known as rights and duties. But man's conception of his rights and duties has always been relative to his own environment. There is no absolute standard of right and wrong. What one society of people considers to be right, another society will consider to be wrong; or, at least, look upon it as a matter to be treated with in-

difference. This, to some extent, accounts for the difficulty with which various classes, communities, and nations mingle together. But as men of different societies learn to agree more and more as to the principles of human actions, and as they learn to respect each other's differences of opinion concerning matters upon which they fail to agree, progress is made in the direction of widening the sphere within which men are able to intermingle with freedom and happiness.

There is nothing divine in this. Our moral feelings and ideas are dependent upon the quality of our brain and nervous system, and the way in which they are affected by our environment. It is by experience that we have all to learn what is best for us to do in order to contribute to the attainment of our own well-being and happiness, and that of our fellow-men. And, in order to do this, it is necessary that we should observe the effects which our speech and actions produce in the lives of those with whom we have to deal. Then, with care and thought, we shall learn how to correct our mistakes in conduct, and make some progress in living for truth, kindness, friendship, and purity. Materialism, rightly understood, does not provide any justification for laxity of living. It insists that matter in motion is essential to human feeling, thinking, and acting, but it also recognizes that matter in motion is capable of expressing itself in beautiful forms, and no less so in human character than in external nature.

The cultivation of art, science, literature, poetry, and the love of the beautiful in Nature, find their place in the philosophy of the Materialist; or, if they fail to do so in any particular case, it is because of some imperfection in the evolution of the grey matter of the brain. It is man's work, therefore, to do all he can to improve his environment so that it will react with favourable influence upon his brain, and thus make him more capable of performing the duties and enjoying the pleasures of life.

E. EGERTON STAFFORD.

N. S. S. Conference.

Executive's Annual Report.

BY THE PRESIDENT.

IT says much for the inherent strength of the Freethought Movement that, after nearly four years of war, your Executive is able to report continuous progress in all directions. In all parts the interest in our propaganda is increasing, meetings have been more numerous than has been the case for some years; the attendances have been large and enthusiastic, and the demand for our literature sustained. The threatened religious revival has not transpired, but there has been a decided awakening of Freethinking activity and interest.

The Executive takes pleasure in reporting that the accession of new members, noted in last year's report, continues, with gratifying results. During the year new Branches of the N. S. S. have been opened at Regent's Park (London), Goldthorpe, Southampton, Nuneaton, and Portsmouth. Branches in other parts of the country are also in process of formation, and it is hoped that in the near future a network of Branches may be established throughout the country.

It is also gratifying to record that the Branches formed during the past and previous years are settling down to work in a business-like spirit. The Swansea Branch, which works in one of the strongholds of Welsh Nonconformity, has had a most successful winter season. Meetings have been regularly held, and the audiences have been satisfactory from the point of view of numbers and enthusiasm. The New Manchester Branch can now boast of one of the strongest memberships in the country, and also reports a successful winter season. Birmingham friends were fortunate in securing the use of the new and handsome Repertory Theatre, and the fortnightly meetings have given great encouragement to

all. Local friends would be well advised to see that this experiment does not break down for want of a little timely financial aid. Liverpool has been suffering from inability to secure a suitable hall, but it has held some meetings in the best available place, and the results have shown that the public is ready for the call when it is made. South Shields has had occasional special lectures, also with success. Glasgow, which, in a sense, is now farther than ever away from London, thanks to increased railway charges, has had its meeting-place commandeered by the Government; but up to that point the meetings addressed by the President and Mr. Lloyd were large and enthusiastic. Southampton, Goldthorpe, and Nuneaton have also settled down to work, and the results have been such as to encourage them to look forward to the autumn with increased hopes and pleasurable anticipations.

In London, a successful series of Sunday Afternoon Meetings were arranged by the Executive, and were only suspended when religious prejudice prevented our further use of the hall. More lectures would have been arranged but for the shortage of halls, a difficulty more or less general—owing to the War. For the rest of London, the open-air stations were well maintained during the summer; and during the winter, Sunday Evening Meetings were carried on by the South London Branch. In North London the local Branch inaugurated a series of Sunday Evening Open Discussions, which aroused considerable interest in those who made it their business to attend. This is a feature that might be followed with profit by Branches elsewhere.

The Executive deeply regrets to report the death of Mr. Samuel Morley Peacock, of South Shields. Mr. Peacock was one of the Society's oldest Vice-Presidents, and no Freethinker in South Shields was better known or more respected. His interest in educational matters was always keen, and for many years he sat on the local School Board as a staunch supporter of the policy of Secular Education. His death robs Tyneside of one of its familiar figures. It is gratifying to learn that the Secular Society, Limited, is one of the beneficiaries under his will.

During the year a scheme has been propounded to present a portrait of Charles Bradlaugh to the National Portrait Gallery. It is not yet quite certain whether the Trustees will accept the portrait; but failing their acceptance, it will be presented to some other public institution. The portrait is to be painted by the Hon. John Collier, and the sum required is about £200. Over £100 has been subscribed, and the remainder will no doubt be forthcoming when required. A Committee has been formed to carry the scheme through. Mr. Cohen is a member of the Committee, and a subscription towards the cost of the portrait was voted by the Executive.

When this Conference met last year, we were able to congratulate the Secular Society, Limited, on its magnificent victory in the Law Courts. It was quite plain that one consequence of this victory was to legalize a bequest to any Freethought Society, whether the Society was registered or not. The Conference had scarcely adjourned before proof of this was furnished. An old friend of the Movement, Captain Raggett, died, leaving a small bequest to this Society. The testator's solicitor wrote, asking for particulars of the Society, so that he might advise the executors of Captain Raggett's will. These were at once supplied, and the bequest was paid without demur.

The Executive has great pleasure in reporting that the dispute with the London County Council over the sale of literature in the parks and open spaces under its control has been brought to a satisfactory conclusion. It will be remembered that the L.C.C. decided to prohibit the sale of literature in such places, in connection with meetings, after September, 1916. Your Executive saw in this a quite unwarrantable attack on the right of public meetings, and felt that, if allowed to pass unchallenged, it would only be the beginning of still more drastic and retrogressive steps. On the initiative of the Executive, a Defence Committee was formed, on which your President represented the N. S. S., and Miss Vance acted as Hon. Secretary. Mr. F. Verinder, a Churchman, but a man who values public rights and justice above all, acted as Chairman, and deserves the highest praise for his untiring and able direction of affairs.

After several summonses had been heard in the police

(Continued on p. 296.)

Acid Drops.

We ought to have noted last week a case in connection with the Central London School Assistants and Southwark Union. The Superintendent reported that a number of boys had been caned for absenting themselves from afternoon "Divine Service." The day was a fine one, and the boys had gone out instead of attending chapel—which shows good judgment on the part of the boys. The Rev. T. Green, one of the Managers, suggested that the Chaplain might arrange for an evening service. It is noticeable that no objection was taken to the caning. What we should like to have, is the name of this flogging bigot who is so fond of the cane as an adjunct and as an aid to religious instruction. The matter has been referred to the "House Committee," and we hope that body will express a pretty sharp opinion on the matter.

The Congregational Union of Scotland gravely suggests placing wealthy Germans in every hospital ship—removing them last if the ships are torpedoed. Certainly an original way of forgiving one's enemies.

Canon Hodgson has not the courtly manners of a Lord Chesterfield. Referring to the women munition-workers, he asked, "Are they a righteous lot?" and added, "One is a bit anxious about the future home life of England." The obvious reply is that everybody would be far more anxious about the homes of England if the defence of the country had been left to the skin-careful clergy.

Westminster had the unusual experience lately of a Roman Catholic procession to the Abbey. It was organized by Father Bernard Vaughan, and was a pilgrimage to the shrine of "Saint" Edward the Confessor. In the Abbey, Father Vaughan said they asked for the "saint's" intercession at the Throne of Grace for aid in fighting the Germans. The cream of the jest is that equally pious Catholics in Austria and Germany are pleading with other "saints" for the success of the Central Powers. And, as there are more Catholics on the Continent, their appeal is very likely to be more noisy and insistent.

Referring to the Germans' claim that they made the mist under cover of which they attacked the Fifth Army, the *Daily News* says "Joshua's performance in the valley of Ajalon is beginning to look very contemptible." Where does the editor of the *Daily News* expect to spend eternity?

At Riga, the Germans have converted the Greek Orthodox Cathedral into a Protestant place of worship. What terrible "Atheists" those Germans are!

Mr. John Kensit is beating the Protestant drum very loudly, and is lecturing on "Is Rome Behind the War?" Even he must admit that the influence of the Roman Catholic Church is not very pronounced in Bulgaria, Russia, Turkey, and Japan.

The Vicar of Feltham, at a meeting of parishioners, produced a balance-sheet, stating that, after necessary expenses were deducted, he "received minus £73—4s. 10d. a house." Has he taken lessons in book-keeping from the Bishop of London, who professes poverty on an income sufficient to keep fifty families?

The tenderness of the military authorities towards the clergy has now been extended to the religious camp-followers. According to a newspaper paragraph, it is not proposed to call up "full-time workers of the Young Men's Christian Association." "Praise God from whom all blessings flow!"

The clergy are very fond of exploiting the War for the benefit of religion. Billy Sunday, the American Evangelist, sent a telegram to Mr. Lloyd George: "We are with you to the trench." Billy ought to know that the clergy prefer

their parsonages to the trenches; and that he has no mandate to speak for the American Armies.

General Maurice, whose name is on everybody's lips, is a grandson of the Rev. Frederick Denison Maurice, the famous Christian Socialist, and the friend of Tennyson and Kingsley. He is chiefly remembered as the first Church of England clergyman who protested publicly against the dogmas of eternal damnation and hell fire.

We are glad to see the *Nation* giving a rap over the knuckles to those fiery members of the Established Church who write as though the question of marriage concerned them alone. It is not for the Anglican Bishops, as the *Nation* well says, to decide what form of marriage is right and what is wrong. That is wholly for the Secular State. And the Anglican Church is a part of the State. It was created by the State, fed by the State, its ritual decreed by the State. If certain people want a religious performance at marriage, let them have it. That is their own concern. But we fancy the fussiness of the bishops will serve only to teach sensible people that the civil form of marriage is the only one that really matters.

The death of George, King of the Tonga Islands, reminds us that the deceased monarch's predecessor was known as "the only Wesleyan King." Lest Wesleyans should get "swelled heads," we add that the monarch was a coloured brother.

A Select Committee of the House of Lords has recommended that the St. Olave's Church, Southwark, Bill should proceed on the ground that the church is useless, and the churchyard derelict and disreputable. The Christian religion does not appear to be flourishing in the Capital of the Empire.

The May Meetings have one advantage, and that is they throw considerable light on the inside of the Churches. The clergy are adepts at window-dressing, but at these annual functions matters are discussed which are kept discreetly in the background at other times. Thus, at the Congregational Union meeting the question of overlapping churches was discussed, and a suggestion was made that in villages where more than one chapel was to be found, and where there were not enough people to fill more than one place, one building should be used as a village hall. This, as our French friends would say, is the beginning of the end.

The British and Foreign Bible Society's output since the commencement of the War has been forty millions. What a waste of paper!

The Bishop of Lichfield says "our soldiers are literally defending our hearths and homes." He did not add that the great majority of the dear clergy were safe in their vicarages.

Lord Leverhulme says that "the most valuable adjunct in life is leisure." The dear clergy found that out many centuries ago.

The *British Weekly* is sometimes very sententious. In a recent issue it pointed out that "it is, however, always most dangerous to put one's head between the jaws of a lion." Unless, of course, the lion is as polite as the animals who smiled at the prophet Daniel.

The Rev. J. Pughe-Jones, R.A.F., formerly curate of St. James's Church, Brookfield, Highgate Road, has been described as "the first flying preacher." Surely, there is a mistake in this description. The Gospels state that the Founder of Christianity did some flying in his time.

The Rev. Bernard T. Snell, ex-president of the Congregational Union, says that he has heard Churches spoken of as "permanent garrisons opposed to popular ideals." He will find it difficult to refute the soft impeachment.

To Correspondents.

- J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.—May 26, Maesteg.
- D. N. (Edinburgh).—We have glanced through the *Message from God*, and if it is really authentic, its silliness will explain many things in his alleged government of the world.
- D. LEGAB.—We have every sympathy with the mothers and wives who have lost sons or husbands in France. But their finding consolation in religion is evidence only that they believe in their religion. If they believed in another religion, they would find in it as much or as a little comfort; and if they were without religion altogether, it would make no difference in the way they face disaster—which is ultimately an expression of temperament and education.
- MRS. M. LESTER.—We do not know any Nature songs that would suit you. We should think a number of ballads, such as any music dealer would recommend, would meet the case. But your husband's choice, we think, is good. It is well not to be too sensitive on such matters.
- J. B.—Received, with thanks. We endorse your estimate of the gentlemen named. "Jolly good fellows" describes them well.
- G. E. FRANCIS.—Let us know your wishes, anyway. We will do all we can.
- W. REPTON.—Pleased to hear from you, and to know that you are well.
- M. F. BISHARA (Egypt).—We do not see any evidence whatever of a "soul" in hypnotism. The brain is *not* incapable of thinking in this state, since it acts on suggestions and carries them into operation.
- THREE DUNDEE FRIENDS.—15s. for distribution of literature among the men at the Front.
- J. E. WITHEFORD.—Parcel of literature for distribution is being sent. Pleased to know that you have been relieved of Church attendance, and also that so much interest in the *Freethinker* is shown by your fellow-soldiers.
- F. BETTS.—Thanks. Shall be able to use later. Rather crowded at present. We do not anticipate much trouble so far as we are concerned, but time will show.
- T. JONES.—We are sending the paper for thirteen weeks to the address given. We are also enclosing some other literature. This is in accord with our offer of last week, and the expense is covered—so far as the *Freethinker* is concerned.
- W. BRIDEN AND OTHERS.—*Freethinker* being sent for thirteen weeks, free, to addresses given.
- D. MASON.—Mr. Cohen is not likely to be lecturing before September 24, when he commences his winter season in the Town Hall, Birmingham.
- R. H. ROSETTI.—Very glad to see from your letter that you are still exempt from the attentions of German shells and bullets. We welcome also your expressions of appreciation of our work. We are looking forward to the time when you will again resume your work for the Old Cause.
- A. B. MOSS.—We greatly appreciate the congratulations of so old a writer and speaker for Freethought as yourself. We intend keeping on with our work, and to follow your advice so far as is possible.

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

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

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

Sugar Plums.

We must ask the indulgence of our correspondents this week for a number of letters remaining unanswered, and also for a paucity of paragraphic matter. But we have only one pair of hands, and as everything has to be done single-handed, and there has been unusual pressure of work in other directions, we sometimes need more than a twenty-four hours' day to do it all. We shall make good all lee-way by our next issue.

The following Resolution has been passed by the Liverpool Branch of the N. S. S., and copies sent to all Liverpool M.P.'s and to the Minister of Education:—

That this meeting of the Members of the Liverpool Branch

of the National Secular Society hails with pleasure the introduction of Mr. Fisher's New Education Bill in the present Session of Parliament, and desires to emphasize the need for purely Secular Education. We contend it is morally wrong to teach children in the Public Schools, at the public expense, particular views on the nature of religion, and we demand as a matter of elementary justice for the adult, and freedom for the child, that all forms of religious education be eliminated from the school curriculum.

We hope other Branches and Societies will follow suit.

Mr. W. Walden writes from France to tell us that, thanks to the Army Order which we published in this paper, he has had his own way in getting his position in relation to religion recorded, and is also "dismissed" from attendance at church. We are very pleased to hear this, and also that the free literature we have sent out "has fallen on fruitful soil."

Mr. F. Betts writes—

As you will see I am in the Army, my experiences may possibly interest you, as I joined up as an Atheist.

My first skirmish was on attesting, when Captain Cyril Yard tried to saddle me with a religion. I objected. He objected to my objection. I persisted in what I termed my right, and he phoned to H. Q., Wolverhampton. They were quite at sea. Finally I produced a copy of the Oaths and Affirmation Acts, 1888, and pointed out the procedure of affirmation. He expressed his regret for his ignorance, and asked permission to retain copy of the Act.

My second skirmish was at Fort Brockhurst, when the question of religion again rose over my identification disc. After some discussion, my "rosary" was stamped "F. Betts, Atheist." I had won again.

Having entered the Army without a religion, one would have thought that I might rest in peace. It was not so. The question of Church Parade arose. Once more I stood out for my right as a Freethinker. I was offered "Police Duty" as an alternative. As an *alternative* parade I accepted it. During my stay there I always accepted that fatigue. In fact I came to enjoy the three hours, 9 p.m. till midnight, when I could commune with the night.

Arriving here I again firmly insisted on my being exempted from Church Parade. It was granted—*without any alternative*.

We are evidently making headway in the Army, as elsewhere. We wish that all Freethinkers would follow the example set by Mr. Betts.

Several friends have written enclosing the names of soldiers to whom copies of the *Freethinker* are to be sent for three months. Twenty-one of these quarterly subscriptions have been paid for by a friend, and our list is not yet complete. And if it were, we should still send. As a matter of fact, we have been sending free literature ever since the War started. And it has done considerable good.

The Secretary of the new Maesteg Branch writes that Mr. Lloyd's meetings will be held in that town in the Gem Cinema Theatre at 2.30 and 7.30. A "light tea" will be provided for all visitors from a distance. We hope these will be numerous, and the hall crowded. There should be half-a-dozen new Branches in S. Wales before the year is over.

Sir Harry H. Johnston is to deliver the Ninth Conway Memorial Lecture at South Place Chapel, Finsbury, on Thursday, May 30, at 5, p.m., his subject being "The Urgent Need for a Reform in Education." Admission will be free, except to a few reserved seats.

These are the days when the price of everything goes up and so it is cheerful to record a case where the price has gone down. The Pioneer Press has a few hundred copies of the late G. W. Foote's *The Grand Old Book*, a criticism of the Bible, which was originally published at a shilling. It is now being offered at twopence, postage 1½d. Only a small number is available.

We regret that owing to want of space we have been compelled to hold over the continuation of Mr. Palmer's informing series of articles until our next issue.

Presidential Notes.

ON Sunday last the Annual Conference of the N. S. S., in one of the most representative gatherings of recent years, did me the honour of re-electing me as its President. Every Branch of the Society—now numbering nineteen as against nine when I became President two years ago—was represented, save one, and that one was only unrepresented by accident. In the circumstances, I feel it a personal compliment that so many delegates should have travelled to London from distances represented by Glasgow at one extreme and Swansea at the other, in order to support my candidature. Except for a very small and well localized opposition, the support given was general throughout the country. I was again assured of the confidence of British Freethinkers, and I think I know myself well enough to be assured that this confidence will continue. Opposition to a new President seems hereditary in the N. S. S. Charles Bradlaugh had it when he commenced his Presidential career; G. W. Foote also experienced it; and the "law" is again fulfilling itself. I am encouraged, however, by the knowledge that neither of these great men had, at the outset of their Presidential career, so small a minority in opposition or so large a majority in support.

With regard to the general business of the Conference, discussion on my proposals for re-organization took up so much time that only the necessary formal business was attempted. Owing, also, to the determined opposition of a minority in the meeting, it became impossible adequately to discuss my proposals in the time at the disposal of the Conference. They might have been carried substantially as they stood, as the majority of delegates appear to have come with the authorization of their Branches to vote in their support, and had I forced the issue they would have been carried. But it is always possible to move amendment after amendment, and so spend time, and in the end, so that the complaint that they had not been adequately discussed could not be made, I agreed to the matter being referred to a committee made up of three delegates from London, four from Provincial Branches, which with the President and Secretary, should consider my scheme, and report, with such alterations and additions as are thought desirable to a Special Conference.

This delays a much-needed reform, but the delay is not my fault. I have done my duty in bringing the matter to a head. The question of re-organization cannot now be evaded or denied, and so good has been done. Perhaps it is all for the best. I am certain that those delegates who were present from all over the country will see the need for something to be accomplished in the shape of creating a really democratic society which shall actually represent the members composing it.

Personally, I shall continue as I have done hitherto. Two years of my Presidency has left the N. S. S. stronger, and more active in every way than when I assumed office. I am hopeful that the third year will show a still greater advance. I have no other interest in the matter than that of the dominating one of devotion to a great cause.

CHAPMAN COHEN, *President N. S. S.*

On earth discord! A gloomy Heaven above opening its jealous gates to the nineteen-thousandth part of the tithe of mankind! And below an inexorable Hell expanding its leviathan jaws for the vast residue of mortals! O doctrine comfortable and healing to the weary wounded soul of man.

—Robert Burns.

(Executive's Annual Report—continued from p. 293.)

courts, the Committee took a step which it had all along regarded as inevitable. A test case was raised on an application made for a permit to sell literature by a Branch of the National League of the Blind. This was refused, and application was made to the High Court asking for a rule calling upon the L.C.C. to show cause for its action. This was granted without hesitation, and came on for hearing before Justices Darling, Sankey, and Avory. The judges were unanimously in favour of the applicant, and gave judgment to that effect, with costs. The victory was complete, and the matter now stands substantially where it did before the Council took its ill-advised action. It is to be hoped that the regulations will now be carried out with justice to all concerned. The Executive has, however, justification in congratulating the Society on the outcome of its endeavours. The question was purely a matter of principle, and that principle has been vindicated. It should be added that the Executive contributed from its funds £10 towards the cost of the case, and a sum of over £40 was raised by the Editor of the *Freethinker* and handed over to the Committee.

The War has brought to the front a subject that is always of importance to Freethinkers. When the War began, there was considerable doubt in the minds of both officers and recruits on the question of affirmation. Thanks to the publicity given to the matter in the *Freethinker*, complaints on this head have greatly diminished in number. A soldier has exactly the same rights as a civilian, and with respect to a statement of religious opinion, officers are bound to take that as given, and anyone joining the Army or Navy may be entered as Freethinker, Atheist, or Agnostic, or by any other title. The large number who have insisted upon their right has had an educational effect on all concerned.

Attendance at Church Parade and at Church still remains, however, compulsory. Letters continually reach headquarters protesting against being compelled to take part in a service in which they do not believe, and to which they have the strongest possible objection. Under prevailing conditions not very much could be done; but full publicity has been given to the matter, the War Office has been made acquainted with the grievance, and, as a result of the publicity achieved, numbers of soldiers have asked to be relieved from Church Parade, the authorities showing a disposition to deal more adequately with the matter in the future. Your Executive must, however, again protest against the injustice of denying to a soldier a right conferred upon all civilians in all civilized countries. Men will not be worse, but better soldiers, when due regard is paid to some of the deepest of their intellectual convictions.

The question of religious instruction in the schools still remains where it was. No mention of religion is made in the Bill now before Parliament, and there are reasons for believing that this may be dealt with in a separate measure. If this is so, it is almost certain to be on the basis of an agreement between the Christian sects, in which the rights and claims of non-Christians will be substantially ignored. In these circumstances the Executive urges Freethinkers everywhere to be active and on the alert. Much may be done by seeing that a resolution is passed at all meetings where it is possible to bring one forward, calling for the application of the principle of the Secular solution in all State supported schools. No other policy is just, and no other policy will put an end to that which has for more than a generation obstructed educational progress. Freethought stands here for no sectarian advantage but for an all-round measure of justice.

The Executive feels that it is fully justified in closing this Report on a note of satisfaction with the year that has closed, and of the increased hope in the future. Everywhere the story is one of progress. The War, which has disproved many time-honoured fallacies, has, undoubtedly, given an impetus to various hitherto unfashionable opinions. The very general feeling of disgust at the attitude of the clergy in first playing the part of active recruiting agents, and then being exempted from the operations of the Military Service Acts, the shock given by the War to those who believed that in some way Christianity was an instrument of good in the

world, have combined to drive thousands to a reconsideration of the whole question of religion, and this has reacted powerfully in favour of Freethought. Freethought to-day is more active and more actual than it has been for many years. All over the country men and women are beginning to realize that Freethought is no mere academic question with which to pass an idle hour. They are realizing that, on the contrary, it forms the condition of the solution of the gravest social problems. Now, as ever, the "Age of Reason" is the condition for the achievement of the "Rights of Man." It is for our Society to make the most of the opportunities that now present themselves, and organize for a more effective warfare against the enemies of truth, freedom, and justice.

Immortality.

I HAD climbed the steep of a Gloucestershire lane, and stood gazing upon a panorama of wonderful beauty. The "Surprise View," it is called, and nothing was ever more appropriately named; for on reaching the brow of the incline one beholds, stretching in one grand sweep, the magnificent valley, rich in colour and stately in its impressiveness. I was glad to rest, though I forgot tiredness in the entrance of the valley. I tried to enjoy the full of every detail, but the grandeur was baffling.

In parts, the slopes leading down to the picturesque waterway were thickly wooded, whilst the rest was apportioned into wide stretches of meadows and fields with boundary hedges seeming like the grotesque pencilling of a cubist drawing. The thin, silvery wind of the river could be seen meandering a way between its verdant borders, occasionally receding from view behind the timbered protrusions of high banks. The further side of the valley was suffused by the purple tint of distant atmosphere, whilst the full glare of the early afternoon sun made the extensive pastureland a motley of varied greens. The sky appeared a blue wash, showing up with pleasing distinctness a solitary belt of snow-white clouds that seemed to be hung motionless by invisible strands. The whole was a scene of enchanting beauty, and, in spite of the overbearing sultriness, every breath inhaled imbued a bracing naturalness.

The autumn sun gave abundantly, and the heat was terrific; so terrific that one could almost see it like a curtain in the middle distance. Everything seemed resigned to mute acceptance of the relentless rays. There was a slothness in the gait of pedestrians, whose lethargic locomotion suggested a strong desire to withdraw to pleasant shades. The air held all in a stagnant grip. Overhead, the throb of an aeroplane reverberated in a drone that pressed. There was not the slightest wisp of a breeze to stir the full-foliaged trees, or to scatter the heat that glanced from the ground. Stillness—intense stillness that held the temples in a vice—lay heavy everywhere.

Yet deep down, chafing beneath that stillness, there was life. It was not aggressive. Nature was in a sluggish mood, but permeating all—every blade of grass—was coursing life. The very quietness and submission to the inevitable, denoted—impressed—that somewhere there was an indomitable force. The whole landscape was bulging with it, quietly waiting to give riotous expression.

The heat-laden ray beat me to cover. I looked round for a sheltered place, and at last located, just below, an erosion in the hillside. I made a circuitous descent, and entered the enclosure, settling myself in the shade at the foot of the earthen wall.

In comfort I enjoyed the glorious scene, noting the immediate surroundings. The road by which I had approached led through a low-lying village to my right, but I had branched off by a pathway which continued, close beside me, through the churchyard not more than a stone's throw away. The church itself stood on prominent guard over the cluster of cottages and farms of the village whose roads (as befitted the humble supplication of rural devotion) all led to the arrogant sentinel above. From some of the cottage chimneys smoke rose perpendicular, making thin milky tracings to the sky. The planning of those cottages was delightfully irregular, some seeming to crowd others out of existence, whilst odd ones were aristocratic with their spacious yards and gardens.

Then, as I gazed at that tranquil fluttering of civilization, a curious comparison commanded my thought. On the one hand was the Church, monumental and inanimate; on the other the wonderful unsullied craft of nature resplendent in glorious transformation. The two became more incongruous as I meditated. The Church, what did it represent? Its complacent indifference challenged the glory of its setting. Yet it stood as a thanksgiving. The anomaly! One day in seven within its manufactured portals (sanctified by nominal travesty) praise of the beauty around was offered through liturgical burlesque and monotonous chanting: Superstition and pageant mummery are the height of artistic appreciation that civilization has bequeathed to the Church—or the Church to men. And men bow their heads.

But the valley. There my thoughts probed the lapse of ages. That interminable stretch of time seemed an impassable gulf, yet it was easily bridged. Slowly the ego faded until the "I" was no more, the while receding through the labyrinths of cause and effects. Back to the almost incredulous embryo; dissecting and analytical, wandering among the phantasmagoria of prehistoric forms—of cells and protoplasm. Then, again, returning slowly along the course of evolution. The scheme, dovetailed and interlocked in perfect order and symmetry, was perplexing—bewildering to a plebeian mind. But even my dulled senses grasped the great truth—the true fact of existence. Permeating, vibrating, through every atom was some supreme force of animation; the co-ordination of all matter that could not be separated, inter-existing so that the least could not be taken away. A gradual evolutionary force that neither lagged nor gathered impetus. It was inviolable for all time. For all time! In a flash my scattered senses were steadied—for all time—that was it—the real immortality.

Voices just above jerked me back to self-consciousness. A party had been viewing the scene, and, as they moved away, a voice was saying: "Yes, it is a pretty view—but the church, is it not superb?" I shuddered in spite of the heat. The graven image is ever worshipped.

W.

Demonstration at Queen's Hall.

MR. CHAPMAN COHEN presided at the evening public meeting, which was well attended, many provincial visitors being present. He was supported by Messrs. J. T. Lloyd, A. B. Moss, F. Willis, A. D. Howell Smith, W. Heaford, and Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner.

Mr. Cohen, who had a very cordial reception, said that the National Secular Society was one of the oldest societies in Great Britain. It had always been connected with fighting, ever since the days of Charles Bradlaugh, its first President. Its second President was G. W. Foote, who possessed one of the best brains and most cultured intellects that English Freethought ever had. He himself now stood in the position of these two illustrious men. The mere position of the presidency of any society did not appeal to him, as such, for he never cared for honours, and would no more think of running after a president's job than a knighthood—a title which was thrown about as recklessly as stale bloaters. But as head of the N. S. S. there was an opportunity of doing work on behalf of one of the noblest causes that ever occupied the minds of men. And from this point of view there was both a compliment and an opportunity in being selected the member of the National Secular Society to represent their cause to the world. There is great need for Freethought in the world. It is the only thing that could break down international suspicion and promote the genuine brotherhood of nations. A frame of mind lies behind every movement. Fools run after knaves more energetically than knaves pursue fools. Freethought makes men think.

The clerical prophecy of the revival of religion had not been realized. Angels appeared at Mons, but they had probably only enlisted for three years, and not the duration of the War, and the angels had vanished. All over the world men see the failure of Christianity; they look at the world and they realize that it could hardly be worse. The clergy have missed their chance. They might have stood as representatives of humanity and brotherhood in a world gone mad. But the

priests were ever opportunists. They went to the Front—or near the Front—and came back with delicious yarns of soldiers begging for more chaplains. We all know how far these tales were true. Soldiers' letters proved the truth as to whether for one request for cigarettes there were a dozen for chaplains. And religion did not bubble from soldiers when they were on home-leave. The clergy clearly believe that truth is a valuable thing, not to be thrown away indiscriminately.

If there were not a revival of superstition, there was a revival of Freethought. He had received letters from all parts of the fighting area proving this. Common sense is catching, and thousands were thinking now who never thought before. The logic of events is teaching the supremacy of reason. Men are beginning to realize that there is sanity in Secularism. If there is another life, that is all the more reason for making the most of this. A man cannot be happy by himself; he must share his happiness with others. Unselfishness is the secret of keeping life sweet, clean, and healthy. The flowing tide is with Secularism. Education is on our side; knowledge is on our side; science is on our side. The world is getting tired of theology and of the clergy. What freedom we have obtained has been purchased at a price awful to contemplate. Pioneers have to endure, and those who follow reap the profit. We have inherited the fruits of their work, and ill deserve the gift if we do not do something in return for the best of causes. The world is always being made better for the many through the sufferings of the few. In the great French Revolution, the last few survivors of the Girondists stood at the foot of the guillotine, waiting for death. As they stood they sang the *Marseillaise*, as only Frenchmen can sing that noble hymn. It was an act of faith by men, who, although dying, felt that Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity would one day be living realities. What the world needs to-day is the undying hope of that hardy band of heroes. For then, man, no longer the dupe of political and spiritual despots, will be conscious of his own power, rulers of the forces around him, and master of his own destiny.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd said that Secularism stood for freedom from the tyranny of the supernatural, and for freedom from false hopes. Christian critics allege that this liberty means licence, but Christians are themselves disbelievers in Freedom. Secularism enhances the reality and importance of this life. Freethinkers did not object to the idea of another life, but they knew nothing of it. Christianity laid too much emphasis on a world to come, and the present Bishop of London told the faithful to think nothing of this world, but to think of God and eternity. Christ himself insisted that his religion was not of this world. Life here was only preparatory to a life hereafter. But this attitude blocked progress. Why should Christians trouble about social reforms here if they were only strangers and pilgrims in the world. In the days of negro slavery Christians told the unfortunate slaves that they would be free in the hereafter; and poor Christians everywhere had always held before them the parable of Dives and Lazarus, where the rich man went to hell and the poor man to heaven. Christians cared more for liberty in other countries than their own. Even Wilberforce, who did so much for the black slave, did not do anything for the white slaves in this country in factories and mines. It remained for a later generation to point out the evils and horrors of child-labour. He heard a preacher recently, and the burden of his sermon was that people were ashamed of Christ and his Gospel. How true that was! Men and women are getting ashamed of the Christian religion, and listening more and more to the voice of Reason.

The veteran, Mr. William Heaford, said that, although an old worker in the best of causes, he felt perennial youth in regarding the vista of the future. Standing in a critical juncture in the world's history, men were perceiving that the Churches had failed. Instead of bringing the redemption of mankind into the region of fact, they had failed to restrain horrors at which mankind revolted. The God of the Churches had been proved to be a great neutral, a deity who did absolutely nothing, although the majority of the nations implored help from heaven. After 1,800 years of the Gospel of Christ Europe was deluged in blood, and it was noticeable that it was Freethinkers who voiced the feelings of humanity, and pointed out that international disputes should be settled by

rational means rather than by the repulsive methods of brute force. A world controlled by Freethinkers could never have had such a history of eighteen centuries as Christianity had given, but would have realized the dreams of poets and philosophers, and made a beautiful world, which would ever be made still more beautiful to posterity.

Another veteran, Mr. A. B. Moss, pointed out that Christians complained that they had left undone those things they ought to have done, and done those things that they ought not to have done, and it was permissible to ask whether such reflections occurred to their deity? It was hard to conceive of a good and kind father in heaven witnessing such a great panorama of tragedy unmoved on the earth. A good deity might, conceivably, have stopped the murder of civilians of old men and women, of little children. He might have shorn the War of some of its worst horrors. The deity had done nothing. All the things of good repute done in this War had been done by human beings. If only the time, money, and energy expended on this dreadful War had been devoted to the spread of knowledge, and for the uplifting of humanity, our children's children would have had the greatest cause to bless their ancestor. The only right way of living was that which would gladden the hearts of succeeding generations.

Mrs. Bradlaugh Bonner was in a reminiscent vein. Speaking as her father's daughter, she said that he valued the position of President of the N. S. S. because by virtue of that office he was the acknowledged champion of Freethought, and could voice the aspirations of thousands who otherwise had been voiceless. Those who worked with Charles Bradlaugh were getting fewer in number, but his influence was still real. She had a letter from Scotland in which the writer said what an inspiration Bradlaugh had been to him, and he added: "If we had a thousand Bradlaughs, England would be a Freethought country." Younger Freethinkers were inclined to underrate the works of the pioneers, forgetting that whatever liberty they possessed had been won for them by their heroic predecessors. At the last Conference Bradlaugh addressed he pointed out that the great fight between Freethought and Superstition had yet to come. In the old days Freethinkers had to fight for the right to think aloud. Bradlaugh could only do so because of the work of Richard Carlile and his colleagues. Huxley, Darwin, and Tyndall were only enabled to build where the pioneers had cleared the ground. Bradlaugh's message was: "Be on guard." The Catholic Church, the strongest Church in Christendom, was as much the enemy of progress and freedom as in the days of the Inquisition. Every Freethinker can help in his own way.

Mr. Howell Smith said the special need of the world was love and fine thinking. We have had enough of hatred and coarse thinking. The Church has professed to preach love, with what results we all know. The Church has taught freedom—in heaven. Freethinkers believe that without liberty on earth life is not worth living. Despite the hymn, "There's a friend for little children," the Church has never been the friend of the child. Nor has the Church done anything for woman. It is not even the friend of the worker, and economic slaves still remain unemancipated. Long before the days of Lord Shaftesbury, Robert Owen, the Freethinker cared for the white slaves of England. All that the Church had done was to claim victories won by other and better men.

Mr. F. Willis, of Birmingham, said he had visited the fighting Front and knew the truth about the boasted revival of religion among the soldiers. The only thing that soldiers wanted to know was concerning the welfare of their kith and kin. Soldiers pinned their faith to shells and not to Bibles. Christians boasted of the miracle of the Virgin's statue of Albert, which, it was alleged, was divinely spared from artillery fire; but what state of mind was it that could conceive of a deity who spared a paltry statue and allowed human beings to be murdered. This War had done harm to Christianity, and men remembered that the Christian God was not a naturalized British deity. It remains for us to dispel superstition from the minds of men, and to realize that the theological tyrants will not live for ever.

G. E. S.

Correspondence.

EPITAPHS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

Let's talk of worms, of epitaphs.
 ...ing *Richard II.*, Act iii. 2.

...ister of Tetbury Parish
 ...llowing inscription:—
 "In a Vault underneath the altar of the Saun-
 derses, late of this Parish, the Last
 Day will disclose ..."

"This monument was erected in memory of
 Sam Jones who was accidentally ... as a mark of
 respect by his brot."

"Here lies the body of Mi
 Safe in the bosom of Abraham,
 'Tis all very well for Mary Anne,
 But it's simply hell for Abraham."

"Here lie the bones of William Jones,
 Who all his life collected bones;
 Till death, that grisly, bony, spectre,
 That most amazing bone collector,
 Hath boned poor Jones, all snug and tidy,
 And here he lies in bona fide."

Added by a wag:—

"De mortuis nil nisi bonum."

The following caustic apothegm was scribbled on the gate of a cemetery by a cynic:—

"Here lie the dead, and here the living also *lie*."

E. B.

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.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, William Archer, M.A., "Our Duty to India."

OUTDOOR.

BATTERSEA BRANCH N. S. S. (Battersea Park Gates): 11.30, Mr. Burke, A Lecture.

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Park, near the Fountain): 6.15, Mr. F. Shaller, A Lecture.

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Corner of Ridley Road): 11.30, Mr. Thurlow, "The Idol of Christendom."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, Mr. H. Johnson, A Lecture.

REGENT'S PARK BRANCH N. S. S.: 3.30, Mrs. Rosetti, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Brockwell Park): 3.15, Mr. H. V. Storey, A Lecture; (Clapham Common): 6.30, Mr. H. V. Storey, A Lecture.

WEST HAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Maryland Point Station): 7, Mr. Spence, A Lecture.

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, Delegates Conference Report.

GOLDTHORPE BRANCH N. S. S. (14 Beaver Street, Goldthorpe): 3, "More Remarks Concerning Hell."

MAESTEG BRANCH N. S. S. (The Gem Cinema, Maesteg): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 2.30, "Secularism and Social Reforms"; 7.30, "Self-Reliance *versus* Trust in God."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N. S. S. (12A Clayton Street East): 6.30, Members' Monthly Meeting. Conference Report, etc.

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, first floor, Fowler Street): 6.30, Delegates Conference Report.

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

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