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Views and Opinions.

Neutrals and the War.

Before America's entry into the War millions of people were blaming her for her neutrality. And I for one sympathized with the complaint. Of course, if war is never more than a balancing of profit and loss, then a country is justified in standing out of a quarrel when it may lose much or gain little by taking sides. But if war is, or is to be, more than that—if to act as the cause of war is to commit the crime of crimes—then neutrality has no place with a people governed by moral considerations. The war-maker is a criminal, and decent people the world over have the same interest in his suppression that they have in that of the confirmed homicide. But American opinion needed education on the rights and wrongs of the War. When that process of education was sufficiently advanced America took the side of the Allies. No one can doubt that had the matter rested with President Wilson war would have been declared with Germany at a much earlier date.

* * *

Our Neutral God.

Now, take President Wilson out of the picture and substitute God. Does the moral issue stand differently? We think not; and for very good reasons. Several correspondents have favoured me with a copy of an article by Mr. B. Newman Flower, which appeared in a recent issue of the *Weekly Dispatch*, entitled "Why God is a Neutral Still." The question to which Mr. Newman Flower attempts an answer is not new. It has been asked by thousands—perhaps millions—of people, and replied to in a score of ways. And these people are still wondering why God is neutral. For the claim of religion has hitherto been that God was not neutral. He was on the side of righteousness. Tracts and books, written by the faithful for the foolish, have provided the world with hundreds of illustrations of God's active interference in the affairs of men. From the case of Sodom and Gomorrhah, blasted by God because of its sins, down to the cases of boys drowned for playing games on Sunday, and infidels stricken with blindness or death for "blaspheming" God, we have been fed with stories of how God does interfere. Have we not prayers to God on the War, which proves the possibility of action; and thanks to God for victories, which assumes that he has interfered? And if God is not neutral in the case of breaking the Sabbath, or similar instances, what can

justify his neutrality in this world-war? Mr. Newman should reflect that a neutral God is a negligible God. A God who does nothing need expect nothing. If we can get through the War without God, we can certainly manage without him afterwards. And if we may be excused a religious figure—when the shades of our slain soldiers reach heaven and ask its ruler: "What did you do in the Great War?" he will have to reply: "Nothing. I remained neutral. It was my world, I made it, and when the crash came I sat aloft watching all that occurred, maintaining a strict neutrality." And if "Tommy" in heaven retains the capacity for picturesque language there will be *some* remarks percolating the celestial atmosphere. * * *

An Apology for God.

Mr. Newman admits that in this War religion has been a ghastly failure. The Churches have done nothing, save to contribute exhortations "that might have fitted equally the opening of the Crystal Palace on the Death of Queen Victoria." "As a public factor to a public good, religion has failed to score a point." Still, Mr. Newman finds a reason for God's neutrality, and it is this. The Germans believe that God is with them. But if the Allies had been able to break down the German military power and secure a crushing victory, the German people would have believed that God was dead—"There was no God." "Central Europe to religion would be lost," or reverse the case. Suppose Germany had overrun France and Britain, "What should we say of God, or religion, or any form of belief? Again, no missionaries in a century would build up the wreckage of that belief into a stable thing." Also, "Suppose God threw in his weight with Germany. Imagine the rape of France complete, the rape of Britain complete, then religion is destroyed in both countries for a century at least." The position, so far, is clear. If God helps the Allies he loses Germany. If he helps Germany he loses the Allies. It is with God a case of "heads I lose, tails you win." So he decides to remain neutral. A more far-seeing Deity would have seen that by this plan he runs a risk of losing both sets of followers. A more intelligent apologist would surely hit upon a more plausible excuse.

* * *

Careless or Callous?

As Freethinkers, we do not expect God to interfere, for the sufficient reason that we see no evidence to justify the belief in the existence of Deity. But if Freethinkers were believers in God, we should certainly expect him to do something to justify his existence. And he has had so many opportunities. Churches have been destroyed with as much impunity as brothels. The pious have been killed as freely as the ungodly. A book of profane poetry has been as effective in stopping a bullet as a Bible. On Whit Sunday, which marked the inauguration of a week of prayer and supplication, one of the most dastardly outrages that even this War has produced, occurred. A large hospital in France, containing many hundreds of wounded men, was deliberately bombed and fired on with machine guns by

German airmen. It needs no word-painting to bring home to all the horror of the situation. And throughout it all God remained strictly neutral. The men on the spot did all they could. The nurses, with a heroism that is beyond praise, stuck to their post, and paid the price in killed and wounded. God alone did nothing—because, says Mr. Newman, if he had interfered he would have lost followers in either Germany or elsewhere! What an apology! And what a condemnation! The Great Neutral! Call him the Great Opportunist, and we shall be nearer the mark. Call him the Great Accessory before and to the fact, and we shall be still nearer the mark. The paralysing horror of belief in a God who can allow such things is only equalled by the colossal stupidity of those who can continue to believe and to worship.

* * *

By the Grace of God.

The German motto is "God with us." This Mr. Newman calls a horrible blasphemy. Stupid it is; false we believe it to be; but why blasphemy? There is nothing new in the cry or the conviction. Some of the vilest crimes in the history of the world have been sanctioned in the same way. When the Bible said,—

And when the Lord thy God hath delivered it into thine hands, thou shalt smite every male thereof with the edge of the sword. But the women and the little ones, and the cattle, and all that is in the city.....thou shalt take unto thyself.....Of the cities of these people which the Lord thy God doth give thee for an inheritance, thou shalt save alive nothing that breatheth,

was that not setting an example to the German in his ugliest mood? And could not the Kaiser find perfect warranty for his own bombast from the same "sacred" volume?—

I will make my arrows drunk with blood and my sword shall devour flesh.....And he shall deliver their kings into thine hand, and thou shalt destroy their name from under heaven; then shall no man be able to stand before thee, until thou have destroyed them.

"God with us" said the ancient Israelites, in their savage tribal warfare. "God with us" said the pious Crusaders, centuries later, when they robbed, and pillaged, and raped, and massacred in the name of Christ. "God with us" was said through all the torturings and murderings of innocents century after century. The Kaiser is in the true religious line. And the lesson is, surely, not that it is blasphemy, but that no such perverter of moral judgment exists in the world as intense religious feeling.

* * *

The Uselessness of God.

God, says Mr. Newman, is neutral. God, says the Freethinker, does nothing. The two statements are, as far as practical life is concerned, identical. The world grew uneasy at the neutrality of America. There was a healthy feeling that so great a nation was not discharging its duty to humanity while such vital issues were at stake. And the feeling was a good one. But, after all, had America continued neutral, President Wilson might have pleaded that America did not make the War, nor the European world in which it arose. But God, if the Christian theory is accepted, did make the world. He made us all. The responsibility for it and us rests with him. And when the world is stricken with this tragedy, he prefers to continue strictly neutral. If the world looks askance at the nation with power to intervene and remains neutral, how shall it regard a God who does nothing? Fools offer apologies, knaves invent excuses, slaves continue to praise where duty is neglected. But clear-minded men and women all over the world are drawing the true inference from the situa-

tion. "God" is an outworn hypothesis. God explains nothing; God does nothing. "God" is nothing about which men and women need seriously concern themselves.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Cross of Christ.

WHAT are we to understand by the Cross of Christ? What has it chiefly stood for in the Church from the beginning? What does it signify in the Pauline Epistles which the Church has always regarded as finally authoritative? To Principal Forsyth, one of the ablest and subtlest of living theologians, the Cross of Christ is the central, supreme, reality in the universe. In his amazingly ingenious and interesting book, *The Justification of God*, he makes the astounding admission that "no reason of man can justify God for his treatment of his Son," but claims that "whatever does justify it, justifies God's whole providence with the universe, and solves its problem." This is a stupendous claim, but the Principal hurls it at his bewildered reader with astonishing vigour and confidence. "The true theology of the Cross and its atonement," he repeats, "is the solution of the world. There is no other. It is that or none." Observe, it is a non-rational, if not irrational, solution that the Cross affords; and, consequently, it is a solution which cannot satisfy Freethinkers, being a solution solely intended for earnest believers. But what is the true theology of the Cross? The following is Dr. Forsyth's answer:—

That theology is that the Cross is not simply the nadir of Incarnation, but that it is God's self-offering (under the worst conditions that love could feel for evil man) to his own holy name. The just God is the chief Sufferer and sole Doer. The holy love there is in action everywhere. The most universal thing in the universal Christ is his Cross. Everywhere, according to God's ubiquity, immanence, or what you will, his holy love is invincibly at issue with death, sin, and sorrow. Everywhere is redemption. And that is the only theodicy. The purpose of salvation is the principle of creation; and the ruling power of the world is the purpose of God (p. 125).

Christ crucified and risen "is the theodicy of God and the justifier both of God and the ungodly. The supreme theodicy is atonement." Such is "the eternal cruciality of the Cross for destiny." The all-devastating enemy of the universe is sin, "but the meaning of the Incarnation is that God was capable, in his self-emptying in Christ, of a self-limitation, *i.e.*, a self-mastery of holy surrender, whose moral effect was more than equal to the foreign invasion by sin." The death on Calvary was God's own death in Christ. The sin that aimed at extinguishing God, God extinguished by dying for it himself. This is how the author puts it:—

His holiness so dies as to inflict on sin a death which it has not power to repel. There is an experience of death that destroys its deadly power. God's moral (*i.e.*, his holy) power converted death itself from the destructive service of sin to his own redeeming service. God in Christ so died that sin lost its chief servant, death, which became now the minister of life, so that its universal curse became universal blessing. Sin, therefore, cost Godhead not its existence but its bliss. It cost the Son of God not his soul but all that makes life a conscious fulness and joy. It cost him the Cross, and all that that meant for such a life as his, God in Christ so met the one enemy as to turn upon him his own weapon of death. God so died as to be the death of death.....He could so identify himself with sin and death, his absolute antitheses, that he conquered and abolished both, in an act which brings to a point the constant victory of his moral being. The destiny of the

world is whatever does most justice to the nature of God, and most glorifies it. And that is, of all things in the world, the atoning Cross of Christ—where therefore the teleology and the theodicy of the world lies (pp. 152-3).

Such, according to Dr. Forsyth, is the true theology of the Cross, which is the solution of the world. We readily do the famous divine the justice of regarding his theory of the death of Christ as logically the most consistent and ideally the most beautiful of all the theories known to us. It is even in essential harmony with the teaching of the New Testament and the various Councils of the Church. It is Augustinianism and Calvinism combined, stated in the terse, angular, paradoxical style so characteristic of the Hackney College oracle. But it partakes of the radical defect which discredits and condemns all other theories of the Cross, namely, that it is nothing but a theory, and has no practical bearing whatever upon human life. It is non-rational simply because there is no truth in it; and it is irrational because, if true, it would be not the justification, but the positive condemnation of God. The death of God, if such a thing were possible, or the Father's treatment of his Son in sending him to crucifixion, would be the quintessence of immorality. It would be fundamentally wrong to punish the innocent for the guilty, the holy for the unholy, and absolutely impossible to abolish death by the immolation of the only begotten Son. Had it ever occurred as described by our author, the death of Christ would have been the most tragic and momentous event in history, nay, the most monstrous, the most criminal thing ever done in the career of Humanity, and no words could have been strong and scathing enough to denounce it: Yet, whilst frankly calling it the greatest, most loathsome crime ever committed, Dr. Forsyth has the audacity to assert that this indescribably horrible crime "became, by the moral, the holy victory of the Son of God, the source not only of endless blessing to man but of perfect satisfaction and delight to holy God," and that consequently, "there is no crime, not even this War, that is outside his control or impossible for his purpose." Surely, it is a new thing under the sun for a theologian to represent God as wickedly exploiting the frightfullest and bloodiest deed on record for the furtherance of his purpose of human salvation. Of course, it is perfectly safe to ascribe any purpose or conduct to an absentee Deity, who neither approves nor disapproves. Indeed, Principal Forsyth treats God with greater familiarity than he would dare to resort to when dealing with his next-door neighbour, and no Divine resentment is ever shown. God expresses no condemnation of the statement that the cruel murder of Jesus became the source of perfect satisfaction and delight to him, and the Principal evidently interprets the silence as a token of agreement; but when he affirms that the same dark deed resulted in endless blessing to man, we can bring him to the bar of history, and call for evidence for and against. What has the Cross of Christ done and failed to do for humanity? The evidence is now in our possession, and the verdict of the court, based upon it, so far from having proved an endless blessing, has been the source of incalculable misery to mankind. What that evidence is we shall endeavour to show in our next article.

J. T. LLOYD.

GOD AND MAN.

An Essay in Common Sense and Natural Morality.

BY CHAPMAN COHEN.

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Christian Camouflage.

The vain crowds wandering blindly, led by lies.

—*Lucretius.*

The carpenter said nothing, but
"The butter's spread too thick."

—*Alice in Wonderland.*

FREETHINKERS are familiar with the methods of the Press Boycott by which all matters relating to Free-thought are either excluded or grossly misrepresented by Christian editors in the interests of their religion. Indeed, in some quarters, the conspiracy of silence against Freethought is simply wonderful. The very name is like that of the God of the Ancient Hebrews, which was never to be spoken. Where the conspiracy of silence is broken, accidentally, the Christians display another aspect of their attitude towards Freethought, which is then misrepresented and slandered. Few, however, are fully aware that this peculiar Christian habit is extended to literature itself, and that the campaign of calumny is just as apparent in some books as in newspapers and periodicals. Look, for example, at the works of reference which are to be found in most libraries, and notice how Freethought and Freethinkers are treated in their pages. Sins of omission and commission constantly leap to the eye of the reader, who may be ill prepared for this exhibition of the fierce flash of the primitive spirit of Christianity. For, nowadays, Christians are no longer able to crush opposition, and they are obliged to answer its arguments or make a show of defending their own doctrines. Feeling that the tendency of Rationalism is against them, and afraid to resist it, they bend before it rather than break.

One of the most popular series of the day is the Home University Library, which includes, among many other volumes, a work on the *Victorian Age of Literature*. This particular work has been entrusted to the versatile Gilbert K. Chesterton, whose peculiar piety is so notorious that the editors apologize for his exuberance. They may well do this, for Mr. Chesterton uses his talents tyrannously in the service of the most reactionary of Churches. He has nothing but the crudest insults for the great "intellectuals." Ignoring the long series of masterpieces that have come from the greatest of living English novelists, Chesterton says of Thomas Hardy that he is "a sort of village Atheist brooding and blaspheming over the village idiot." Algernon Swinburne, a poet of the rarest and most brilliant genius, who has enlarged the boundaries of song, is accused of composing "a learned and sympathetic and indecent parody on the Litany of the Blessed Virgin"—surely an ironical suggestion in a Protestant country. In speaking of *Songs Before Sunrise*, Chesterton tries to belittle those superb lyrics by saying that they were songs before a sunrise that had never turned up. Even the great Victorian authors do not escape censure, and are dubbed, spitefully, "lame giants," and women writers who show independence of thought are derided. Emily Bronte, who gave us *Wuthering Heights*, is described as being as "unsociable as a storm at midnight." The only Freethinker to whom Chesterton is civil is James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, who, he informs us, pontifically, "knew how to be democratic in the dark." As Chesterton spells the poet's name with a "p," the compliment is a very doubtful one, after all. And Gilbert Chesterton is the man, be it remembered, who challenges the dogmatism of the Agnostic; convicts science of irrationality; and who pretends to find liberty inside the least progressive of the Christian Churches. Chesterton, the jester, cuts a much braver figure in the imagination of the public than Chesterton, the Christian apologist.

Another work of reference, *A Short Biographical Dictionary of English Literature*, by J. W. Cousins, issued in Dent's Everyman Library, is open to somewhat similar objections. The following interesting passage relates to Shelley's opinions:—

The charge of Atheism rests chiefly on *Mab*, the work of a boy, printed by him for private circulation, and to some extent repudiated as personal opinion.

James Thomson, the poet, is introduced as an awful warning, for we are told his "views resulted in depression which led to dipsomania." In the case of "George Eliot" the information is given that "her general view of life is pessimistic," despite the fact that this gifted woman expressly coined the word, "meliorism," in order to show her own attitude with regard to optimism and pessimism. Robert Buchanan's anti-Christian views are slurred over by the grudging admission that "his latest poems, *The Outcast* and *The Wandering Jew*, were directed against certain aspects of Christianity.

Still another reference-book, *Chambers' Encyclopædia*, in an edition issued a few years ago, is full of bias against men and women of sceptical opinions. A diatribe against Thomas Paine is quoted from the pen of Leslie Stephen, which the writer apologized for, but there is no mention of this latter fact. Colonel Ingersoll is said to have attracted more attention than he deserved, and readers are referred for information about Charles Bradlaugh to the libellous "Life" by Mackay, a work which Bradlaugh himself proceeded against and had destroyed. Even the then popular novelist, "Ouida," is accused of "muscular heathenry" and "encyclopædic ignorance."

This is the latest form of an infamous religious tradition, which may be traced back through the centuries to Lucretius, and even earlier. The fortunes of really great writers, like Shelley, Meredith, and Swinburne, have been very much influenced by this frigid and calculated misconception. Freethought invariably incurs the hatred of the orthodox, and no enmity is more unscrupulous, more relentless, or more venomous. This garbage is thrown at Freethinkers of set purpose. It is meant to discredit the characters and writings of men and women who look scornfully at the Christian superstition. Freethought has wrested so many positions from Christianity that in order to support the tottering edifice of superstition, believers will hesitate at nothing to buttress the wavering allegiance of their luke-warm fellow-Christians. The Church will never rebuke her faithful followers for "lying for the glory of God." Formerly, the Church used scaffolds, stakes, prisons, and torture-chambers; now she relies on lies, libels, and misrepresentations.

MIMNERMUS.

The Mechanism of Man.

VII.

(Continued from p. 285).

THE alimentary canal is the name for all the complicated passages along which the food travels through the body. A study of the digestive system must begin with that orifice, the mouth, into which the aliment enters. Not only should the teeth be sound and serviceable, but they should be exercised in masticating the food before it is swallowed. Digestion consists in softening and pulping the food so as to enable it to diffuse through the walls of the alimentary canal and pass into the blood, and thus exude through the walls of the vascular vessels into the tissues.

These changes are accomplished mechanically by the action of the chewing muscles, the teeth, and the three muscle layers situated in the walls of the alimentary

passages. Chemical changes result from the action of acids and alkalies on the nutrient substances. Then there are the activities of the ferments or enzymes. These remarkable organic secretions possess the property of producing chemical transformations in substances brought into touch with them, while they themselves continue unchanged. The mouth has one of these secretions, the stomach has two, and there are three in the small intestine.

Until the seventh year, the child's mouth contains twenty temporary or milk teeth. The first of these usually appears when the infant is about seven months old. This set of teeth is shed, and then the permanent teeth cut the gums. These number thirty-two; the earliest appear about the seventh year; and the complete set, unless spoilt by decay, remains throughout life.

People are plentiful who imagine that the main function of digestion is performed by the stomach. This belief is entirely unwarranted. For, in addition to the gastric glands; the salivary glands, the pancreas, and the liver, all powerfully co-operate in the processes of digestion. Those who bolt their food, and these form the vast majority, ignore the far-reaching fact that digestion commences in the mouth. Immediately the food enters the mouth, the saliva of that cavity's salivary glands begin to act upon it. This saliva moistens the food, and thus prepares it for the processes of mastication. It also assists the act of swallowing. When the mouth's interior is parched, swallowing becomes painful and difficult. Moreover, the saliva enables us to taste our food. The organic constituent of the secretion, ptyalin, is an important digestive ferment, which converts starch substances into sugar. Starch contained in food is consequently transformed into sugar while still in the mouth. But this reservation is essential. Ptyalin changes starch into sugar only when granted sufficient time. If the food is insufficiently chewed, it passes into the alimentary canal in an unconverted condition. Unless the aliment is properly masticated, complete insalivation is prevented. As a result, the stomach is overburdened with labour, and the horrors of indigestion begin.

When swallowed, the nutrient matters pass down into the gullet or esophagus, and the muscles of that organ urge them towards the stomach. The solid and liquid nutriment is prevented from passing down the wrong channel by the bending of the epiglottis over the larynx, which lies at the upper part of the windpipe. In this protective office the larynx is now known to co-operate with the epiglottis, which is a sort of lid composed of elastic cartilage which covers the glottis, as the upper aperture of the larynx or voice-box is called.

When the food has entered the stomach, gastric digestion begins. The mucous membrane of the stomach possesses two sets of glands. One glandular secretion is pepsin, which is a most efficient digestive ferment. Pepsin is prepared in the peptic cells, and forms the active constituent of gastric juice. This special fluid is secreted in the gastric glands. Placed between the stomach's peptic cells there are other cells which do not manufacture pepsin, but elaborate the acid of the gastric juice. While digestion is in active operation, the muscles of the stomach's walls contract. Thus the shape of that organ becomes changed. The stomach lengthens and broadens, and its contained food is subjected to a churning process, during which the food is blended with the gastric juice. This fluid is more active than the saliva. The presence of the food in the stomach stimulates the mucous membrane which lines it into action, and its numerous gastric glands busy themselves in the preparation of the gastric secretion.

This powerful digestive juice serves to convert animal and vegetable proteids—substances containing nitrogen, such as lean flesh, cheese, eggs, bread, peas, and beans, into peptones. Unchanged proteids will not diffuse through animal membranes, and are, as such, unavailable for purposes of nutrition. But pepsin so modifies them that they become diffusible, and then they readily pass through an animal membrane. The gastric secretions also arrest the development of injurious germs absorbed with the aliment. The gastric fluid contains a small percentage of hydrochloric acid, and this acid acts as a mild antiseptic. It also aids the pepsin in its activities, for pepsin alone, of all the digestive juices, proves incapable of influencing alkaline bodies. The hydrochloric acid converts substances made alkaline by the action of the saliva into an acid state, and then the pepsin acts with ease.

Proteids are the only alimentary materials reduced by the agency of the stomach and its secretions. The remaining food-stuffs—fats, carbohydrates, salts, and water are immune to the influences of gastric juice, and leave the stomach unchanged. While within that organ the food materials undergo the digestive process of chymification, with the sequel that these foods are converted into chyme. The distinguished Russian physiologist, Professor Pavlov, has recently proved that only when the stomach is stimulated by the presence of food do its glands become active. In the empty stomach no secretions are discharged, and the quantity of digestive juice in the stomach varies in proportion to the amount of food contained in that organ.

As we have stated, the food passes into the stomach at its esophageal opening, and when the nutrient matter has been transformed into chyme, the pylorus—the watcher at the gates—which consists of a tube-like valve situated at that termination of the stomach which passes into the intestines, opens to permit the passage of part of the stomach's contents into the duodenum. The pylorus forms the most narrow part of the small intestine, and its tube, which constitutes the exit of the stomach, is so small that a farthing could barely pass through it. The pylorus relaxes every minute or two, and thus regulates the quantity of chyme which issues from the stomach and enters the duodenum—the twelve-inch intestine. As Meachan says: "The pylorus is a capital gatekeeper, and it shuts up again directly the right amount of chyme has passed through it."

Immediately it leaves the stomach the chyme reaches the first part of the bowel which emerges directly from the stomach, the pylorus standing on guard at the gates. The small intestine extends from the pylorus to the ileo-cæcal valve where the lesser intestine joins the large gut. Its length is twenty-three feet, and its diameter about an inch. Proceeding from the narrow pylorus is the duodenum. This twelve-inch-long intestine forms an extremely important part of the intestinal system. Two invaluable secretions are discharged into the duodenum. This intestinal organ bends round to form a loop which environs the pancreas or "sweetbread." The duodenum constitutes the thickest, widest, and least flexible channel of the small intestine, and it receives both the common bile-duct, and the duct of the pancreas. The bile is the secretion of the liver, but this intestine owes its priority as a digestive organ to the fact that the secretion of the pancreas, the most powerful of the digestive ferments, is poured into it. For while the saliva acts on some of the starch, and the stomach digests part of the proteid, the small intestine digests the bulk of the starch, the greater part of the proteid, and all the fats.

The food remains in the mouth for a few moments, and lingers in the stomach for two or three hours, but it

spends from ten to twelve hours in the small intestine. And, in addition to the secretions of the liver and pancreas which enter the duodenum, there are multitudes of tiny intestinal glands that secrete juice which digests cane sugar. The little intestine also contains a ferment which increases the strength of the pancreatic juice.

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

Acid Drops.

Mr. Lloyd George gave a speech at Edinburgh on May 24, and reminded his hearers that quite near to where he was speaking John Knox gave a copy of the Bible to the Queen of Scotland. And, added the Prime Minister, "We are fighting for the principles of that book." Really, that is news. Among the principles of "that book" are witchcraft, slavery, the subordination of women, the doctrine of damnation for unbelief, demoniacal possession, miracles, and a number of other things all equally out of date. "The principles of that book" is a very elastic phrase, and it is probable that Mr. Lloyd George did not mean what he said. At least, we hope he did not.

Divine Psychology is the title of a new book by a lady. There is one thing quite clear: the writer is not likely to be hampered by anything in the nature of facts. And when one is dealing with the operations of a mind without knowing there is any mind to operate, the book may well be a big one, if not a useful one.

Religion is popularly supposed to change men's hearts. An interchange of views between British and German Baptists, through the Swedish co-religionists, has resulted in a message, quoted in the *Baptist Times*, which shows that the Teutons are on the side of their own Government in the matter of the War. Is this another instance of the powerlessness of religion?

The endowment of superstition goes on apace. The late Mr. Arthur Bowdler, of Blackburn, left nearly £50,000, out of his fortune of £156,784, to the Congregational Union and the London Missionary Society.

The Salvation Army announce further War Fund Flag Days. We thought that this non-military organization was engaged in fighting "the Devil," and not the soldiers of the Central Powers.

A religious periodical contains an advertisement, "Why Blush?" offering a remedy at a low price. Perhaps Christians blush when they read the realistic earlier pages of the Holy Bible.

Some schoolboy "howlers" are unconsciously amusing, and the report of the Chief Examiner of London County Council schools contains some fine examples. In the recent examination for scholarships, one boy estimated the value of education by stating, "You may become a very great man, or else a clergyman." Another wrote, "If God spares our lives, when we grow up we need not become a teacher." Yet another young student ventured to say that "education saves you from going to the dogs."

How fond pious folk are of using the term "Atheistic" without realizing the real meaning of the word. The late Dr. Silvanus P. Thompson, in a posthumous work, entitled *A Not Impossible Religion*, refers to the dogma of the Virgin Birth as a materialistic, non-scientific, Atheistic idea. All that the learned professor meant was that the particular dogma was an odd conception.

Principal Griffith Jones declared, in his address from the chair of the Congregational Union, that "their Churches must be born again" before Christianity can become the controlling power in national and international affairs, which was equivalent to admitting that Christianity is doomed to

complete extinction, the Churches being, in the nature of things, incapable of the requisite birth.

A good story is told of the German Kaiser in Mr. Edward Legge's new book, *King George and the Royal Family*. Once the Kaiser remarked complacently to King Edward: "My people look upon me as a god!" "Not when you're in mufti, William," remarked the King, glancing at his nephew's shooting-coat

The Pope has asked the Kaiser to spare the Church bells and organs. Papa might have thought of the women and children first.

Mrs. Bonwick, a lady preacher, speaking at the Memorial Hall, London, said that the women's ideal was that some day there might be an inter-denominational college where men and women should be trained together. "Oh, that will be joyful!"

The glamour of the "Holy Land" will soon be a thing of the past. The newspapers inform us that the firm of Lipton has opened a store at Jerusalem.

The Ven. E. E. Holmes, preaching recently at St. Paul's Cathedral, sadly admitted that he could not, in the utter impotence of his ignorance, attempt to explain why an omnipotent God refuses to "stop the present-day slaughter." With Christopher Wordsworth, he has sung, "See the Conqueror mounts in triumph"; and yet he fails to "see the victory." If we judge by the facts, there is no possible escape from the conclusion that God "is a King who has ceased to rule." And yet the Archdeacon believes in God, though he is obscured by a cloud, and cannot be seen at all! "He has for a time been taken out of our sight, but our faith enables us to say he is still there."

The newspapers tell us that the German Kaiser has enjoined all Teutons to "cease to talk foreign languages, and to speak Low German." His own command of language is somewhat copious, but his theology is decidedly "low."

Over five hundred undefended divorce cases have been disposed of in London during the Easter term. Apparently, few people nowadays respect the priestly command, "Let no man put asunder those who God hath joined together."

The dear *Daily News* does not object to a joke at the expense of the Church, and it tells a story of a short-sighted bishop who went into a hatter's shop and approached, hat in hat, a customer whom he mistook for the shopman: "Have you a hat like this?" he asked, holding out his own corded beaver. "No!" said the other, "and if I had I'd take jolly good care not to wear it."

A proclamation in the United State announces a day for prayer and fasting. This gives point to the Gallic jest that America is "a barbarism lighted by electricity."

The "twisted mind" of the Germans has "annexed even God Himself" in this War, writes Mr. John Oxenham in a Sunday paper. Yet the dear clergy will persist in saying that the Germans are "Atheists."

The report of the Archbishop's committee to consider the reform of Church administration lays stress on "a living wage" for the parsons. In process of time, doubtless, it will be possible to consider the question of "a living wage" for organists, members of the choirs, and vergers.

Hustle has never been a marked characteristic of Government departments, but a newspaper paragraph states that at noon daily in the women's sections of the Post Office work is stopped for two minutes for prayer. As the men's departments are unaffected by this arrangement, any ill results from hustling the deity should not be felt by them.

The Church of St. Catherine Coleman, Fenchurch Street, London, which has no congregation, is to be sold to furnish funds for ecclesiastical purposes. This is an interesting sidelight on the boasted revival of religion.

The *Church Times* does "not consider that, in modern circumstances, a Church is any the more a safeguard of public morality for being nominally 'established.'" That is perfectly true; but our contemporary does not seem to realize that a Church, whether established or not, has never been a safeguard of public morality. As a matter of fact, the Church, in all ages, has been guilty of the grossest breaches of public morality.

For tactlessness and blundering stupidity the parson, as an individual, is hard to beat, and we can imagine the depth of silliness sounded when they act or think collectively. Lately, we have had an amazing example in a circular letter addressed to heads of colleges, professors, and other responsible persons at Oxford, and signed by over a hundred clergymen, only three of whom are directly connected with the government of the University. It would appear that these gentlemen, who are pious water-drinking prigs, have no stomach for fighting the Germans. They prefer the easier task of stabbing the undergraduates in the back. This is what they call the Lord's business, for which they are exempted from military service. It usually means that a set of black-coated humbugs have a mind to poke its nose into other people's business. At an opportune moment, when the flower of Oxford's youth has offered itself a willing sacrifice for an ideal, when practically the whole of the University is on active service, a number of tactless hypocrites are urging the authorities to interfere with the liberty of the undergraduate to drink what suits him. We are pleased to see that Sir Walter Raleigh, the wittiest of professors, has made public, in the University journal, the letter, in which he administers a scornful rebuke to these preposterous clerical humbugs.

Christians have very quaint ideas of holiday-making. Christ Church, Westminster, was open for nine hours on Whit-Monday for "intercession" services. Every hour addresses were given by preachers, and an added inducement was that tea and coffee was provided, we hope by permission of the food-controller.

His lordship, the Bishop of Birmingham, states that "there is only one Christ for the healing of social diseases." Unhappily, there are so many "social diseases," and Christ is not in the directory.

Octagon Unitarian Chapel, Norwich, has appointed a woman preacher. We wonder what St. Paul and the great leaders of the Christian Church would think of it! But really the Unitarians have no clear claim to be called Christians.

THIS-WORLD-ISM.

Seeing that the Power, whatever it be, that created the world (which, I think, certainly cannot have created itself) has, for the present, while using us as its instruments, reserved to itself the privilege of knowing why it has made us and whither it is leading us—seeing that this Power (in spite of all intentions attributed to it, in spite of all the demands made upon it) appears even more and more determined to guard its own secret—I believe, if I may say all I think, that mankind is beginning to cease to try to penetrate that eternal mystery. Mankind went to religions, which proved nothing, for they differed among themselves; it went to philosophies, which revealed no more, for they contradicted one another; and it will now try to find its way out of the difficulty by itself, trusting to its own instinct and its own simple good sense; and since mankind finds itself here on earth without knowing why or how, it is going to try to be as happy as it can with just those means the earth supplies.

—Alexander Dumas (fils).

To Correspondents.

- A. F. THORN.—We have not received copies of that particular publication for some time. Pleased to have your opinion that *God and Man* is "splendidly vital and lucid."
- W. J.—Your letter has only initials, and no address. We must have these with all communications, if they are to receive attention.
- D. M.—Yours is a substantial way of showing your appreciation, and we hope to avail ourselves of it in the course of two or three months.
- J. FOTHERGILL.—Received. As early as possible, but crowded with articles at the moment.
- A. S. PICKERING.—We agree with your comment on Sir A. Griffith Boscawen's statement that "We have all got to be Christians if we are going to win the War." One would be as great a disaster as the other.
- A. RAWLINSON.—Thanks. The circulation of the *Freethinker* is still creeping upward, and in the course of a week or so we shall be suggesting a plan to our readers by which we think a very material advance may be made. What we have done already makes us certain that more can be done.
- L. STANSFIELD.—We are sending the quarter's paper with pamphlets. Glad the last parcel was found useful.
- J. HUME.—The lying story about Voltaire was completely exposed by Sir T. C. Morgan, in 1822, who secured signed statements from the doctors in attendance. The Paine story has been exposed scores of times. For that, see Moncure Conway's *Life of Paine*.
- T. FOWLER (Coventry).—Have passed on your letter to the General Secretary. The new Branch will doubtless be glad of your assistance.
- J. M.—We are repaid for our trouble by the knowledge that you found our advice so useful.
- N. S. S. BENEVOLENT FUND.—Collection, Queen's Hall, 17s. 2d.
- N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Dr. R. T. Nichols, 10s. 6d.
- D. MASON.—(1) You can hardly expect us to say that we think *God and Man* "unanswerable." It is gratifying to know that you think so. (2) If your friend, whom you say holds a post in one of our Universities, thinks he could disprove what we say, our columns are open to him. (3) We will always make special terms for quantities to be used for distribution.
- A. BRENTON.—Thanks for copy of Upton Sinclair's journal. It is a striking production well calculated to do good in many directions.
- G. A.—You are right. We ought to feel complimented at so many delegates travelling such distances to be present at the Conference. And we quite appreciate their presence. We intend repaying them by renewed activity in the cause.
- W. MANN.—Thanks for congratulations and expression of confidence. Sorry you were subjected to annoyance by undesired and undesirable correspondence. Our readers will be pleased, and so shall we, to see your pen again active in these columns.
- ALEC BRAHAM.—Paper being sent for three months to address given.
- The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.*
- Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.*
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, and not to the Editor.*
- Letters for the Editor of the "Freethinker" should be addressed to 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.*
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the publishing office to any part of the world, post free, at the following rates, prepaid:—One year, 10s. 6d.; half year, 5s. 3d. three months, 2s. 8d.*

Sugar Plums.

Mr. Cohen has received a large number of letters during the past week congratulating him on his re-election as President of the N.S.S., many containing renewed promises of support, with appropriate words of encouragement. It would be impossible to reply to all these letters by post, and words are inadequate to express his appreciation. So will those who have written please take this paragraph as a grateful acknowledgment?

We know our readers will be interested in the following from a recipient of one of our parcels of literature:—

Just home for a few hours, and I must write to thank you for the pamphlets you kindly sent; they followed and reached me quite safe.

The *Freethinker* reaches me—I have it sent every week—and is eagerly looked forward to, and then read and re-read by my two chums and myself until the next *Freethinker* arrives.

Then we hand the old *Freethinker* on, after making sure that it will be appreciated, because I think it too precious to be given into anybody's hands.

I must say your pamphlets found me and my chums, and gave many of my "Christian" messmates an awakening. Further, it is interesting to write that, in a crew of roughly eighty men, there is not one ardent Christian; on the other hand, three ardent Freethinkers.

On every possible occasion I propagate my ideas, and, on the whole, with satisfaction. Moreover, I am not jealous of the Church and her *proteges* in the Royal Navy.

Might I ask a favour? Could you find me someone to correspond with? A letter from a Freethinker at home would be ever welcome.

I am glad you are so optimistic that you will be able to carry on the *Freethinker*, and hope that indeed you will have "a circulation really worthy of it."

We shall be pleased to send the address to anyone who will act as correspondent to the writer of the above.

We are pleased to say that the two four-page tracts *What is the Use of the Clergy?* and *What Will You Put in its Place?* have caught on. They are being well distributed, and we should like to see 50,000 of them in circulation within a month or two. 1s. 6d. will buy a hundred copies, and 15s. 1,000, carriage paid. Their circulation is pure propaganda on the part of the Pioneer Press, as they are being sold at about cost price. More of these tracts will be issued shortly.

In a week or so we shall be publishing a reprint of Mr. G. W. Foote's *Philosophy of Secularism*. It is in the press, and, when issued, will supply a much-needed want. This will be followed by a pamphlet from the pen of Mr. H. G. Farmer, dealing with the religious opinions of great artists and musicians. Those who know how much of an authority Mr. Farmer is on such subjects will look forward to the appearance of this work. We also have in preparation a larger pamphlet by Mr. Cohen on *Christianity and Slavery and Serfdom*, which will be fully documented, and will be found useful for propaganda. This will in turn be followed by another from the pen of Mr. Cohen on *Christianity and Woman*, and later by a treatise on the *Existence of God*. The times are not favourable for publishing, but as the War seems unending, the only thing is to get on with our war. And that we intend doing in spite of all difficulties.

We are pleased to learn that Mr. Lloyd had two very successful meetings at Maesteg on Sunday last. There seems a good prospect of building a very strong Branch there, and we shall be greatly surprised if more Branches are not formed in the district between now and the end of the year.

The wife of a greatly esteemed member now serving with his Majesty's forces writes Miss Vance. The letter is dated May 20:—

I felt I must write and tell you of an incident that occurred last night. The Congregational Church is just opposite their house, and they have a service from 10 p.m. to 11 p.m. every

Sunday evening to try and get God's ear and ask him to stop the War.

I was preparing for bed at 10.45 and listening to them singing "O God, our help in ages past," when the siren went, warning us of approaching aircraft. The singing came to an abrupt end, and the people scuttled down the street like rabbits. My daughter, aged thirteen, was in the room and said: "They haven't given God much time to help them, mother." Please excuse me for taking up your valuable time, but I thought it too good to keep to myself.

Large numbers of people to-day are keenly interested in the question of "Survivals," and, indeed, the sociological and humanistic interest of the subject fully justifies the interest shown. Mr. J. H. Moore has just issued, through the Rationalist Press Association, *Savage Survivals* (2s. 6d. net), which tells in plain but extremely interesting language the story of survivals as they exist in domesticated animals, human society, and social customs. Those who know Mr. Moore's *Higher Kinship* or *Ethics and Education* will hardly need advising to secure a copy of his latest work. Those who have not that good fortune will go far before they can find a volume which, while simple enough for an intelligent boy or girl of thirteen, is suggestive and profound enough for more mature persons. There is material here for a dozen volumes, and its reading is certain to send the beginner farther along the road.

Sex Antagonism, by Mr. Walter Heape, is the last addition made by the Pioneer Press to its remainder list. The work is a strikingly suggestive one, and discusses the subject from the evolutionary point of view, which is the only point of view likely to be of real help. Mr. Heape examines in detail the conditions of sex life in primitive communities, and the three chapters on "Totemism" and "Exogamy" are particularly suggestive. The whole work is worthy of the closest study. It was published at 7s. 6d. net, and is now being offered at 3s. 6d., postage 5d. Only a very limited number of copies are available.

From the *Literary Guide* for June:—

Mr. Chapman Cohen, who has the rare gift of writing both lucid and impressively, has published through the Pioneer Press a threepenny pamphlet, entitled *God and Man*, being an essay in common sense and natural morality. It is long since we read a more interesting and convincing ethical address, or one better suited for propagandist purposes. We warmly commend it to the notice of our readers.

The North London Branch held a very successful meeting on Sunday last. Mr. H. Johnson was the speaker, and a large audience remained interested to the end of his lecture, while the Christian Evidence lecturer, a little distance off, remained talking to "empty benches." One more evidence of the revived interest in religion—perhaps!

An effort is being made to form a Branch of the N.S.S. at Barnsley, Yorks. There are, we know, a large number of *Freethinker* readers in and around Barnsley, and if all these interested in organization will send their names to Mr. H. Irving, 48, Sheffield Road, Barnsley, the Branch will be formed at once. If this can be done it is intended to commence active propagandist work in the autumn.

Sanity and simplicity are the distinguishing marks of the loftiest genius, which may be described as inspired common sense. The great artist never loses touch of facts; he may let his imagination soar as high as the stars, but he keeps his feet firm-planted on the ground. All the world recognizes the sublimity of Greek sculpture and Shakespeare's plays, because they are both true to nature and fact and coincident with everlasting laws. The true sublime is not fantastic; it is solid and satisfying, like a mighty Alp, deep-rooted first of all in the steadfast earth, and then towering up with its vineyards, its pastures, its pine-forests, its glaciers, its precipices, and last of all the silence of infinitude brooding over its eternal snows.—G. W. Foote, "*Flowers of Free-thought*."

The "Tricks of the Spirits."

A FEW weeks ago, as I felt rather depressed over the War news, I called upon Uncle Joe, at his nice little villa residence at Dulwich, to see if he could cheer me up a bit, and make me view the awful tragedies that are taking place in France and Flanders from a larger perspective, and try in imagination to realize how the great conflict must end in the final triumph of right over might.

Now, Uncle Joe is a born optimist. He never looks upon the dark side of any subject for long without finding a bright spot somewhere, and, by infusing a little of his own cheery nature into it, he gradually transforms the whole aspect of the subject. Aunt Jane, on the other hand, is liable to be a bit pessimistic on some subjects; and so many of her friends and relations have lost sons in the great War, or have had them "wounded" or "missing," that any mention of a British reverse sends a thrill of horror through her whole frame, she requires all the comfort Uncle Joe can give her to revive her drooping spirits.

On the evening in question, I opened my conversation with Uncle Joe by telling him that I did not like the idea of the British being pushed back in Flanders, and I feared every step we took in the retreat might spell disaster to us.

"Not at all, my boy," he said; "we are all right. The whole move is a bit of fine strategy on our part, and we are bound to come out on top in the end."

This declaration, made with a fine spirit of manly confidence, put me in a better mood at once, and made me feel that I need not discuss the War any further at present, and that the subject might safely be left in the capable hands of Uncle Joe and the military authorities.

Aunt Jane, however, ventured to make one remark. She did not doubt, she said, that we should win in the end; but, in the meantime, she could not help thinking of the brave young fellows who were sacrificing their lives in order that we should be relieved from the thralldom of German militarism.

When, however, we had talked about the War for a few moments, Aunt Jane changed the subject by informing me, with tears in her eyes, that poor young Walter Williams had died in action, and that his parents were overwhelmed with grief at his loss.

"I don't see why they should be so grieved as other people," said Uncle Joe. "Both of the parents are Spiritualists, and they profess to believe that the poor boy is not dead—that, as a matter of fact, he is as much alive now as he was before a shell burst over him and left his body a bleeding mass of earth on the battlefield."

"But in that they do not differ from the generality of Christians," I replied, "for they weep over the dead just like ordinary people who have no belief in a resurrection and a life of everlasting happiness in heaven hereafter."

"It is true we Christians do grieve over the loss of our dear ones; that is a weakness of human nature," said Uncle Joe; "but we still have the promise and 'a certain hope' of a life to come. But we differ from the Spiritualists. They believe that we never die, and therefore it is folly to weep and sorrow over lost ones, because they are not lost, but are in fact more alive than ever, being relieved of the flesh or raiment in which they have been clothed on earth."

"In my judgment, all Christians, to be logical, should be 'Spiritists.' They believe in a soul that has an existence separate and independent of the body."

"Perhaps so," said Uncle Joe, "but we do not believe

in table-rapping and things of that sort. By the bye, Mr. and Mrs. Williams wanted your aunt and myself to attend some religious services at one of their halls a short time ago; and they also gave us an invitation to attend some private *seances* at which a celebrated medium was to be present; but we did not go."

"Why not?"

"Well, we thought we should like to ask your opinion before we ventured upon such a course. We know that you have studied the subject."

"Personally, I should never attend a spiritualistic *seance* unless I went in the company of an expert conjurer, because I know how easy it is to be deceived; but that is no reason why you should not go. I know enough about the history of the movement and the frauds of some of the leading mediums to convince me that such phenomena as they allege to be capable of producing can be just as well produced under similar conditions by men who confess that the whole thing is done by trickery."

"But they tell me that some of the leading men of science are staunch believers in Spiritualism—distinguished men like Professor Crookes, Sir Oliver Lodge, and Sir Conan Doyle; also that the late Professor Russel Wallace was a believer in it," said Uncle Joe.

"Yes, I know; but none of the evidence that these distinguished men advance in favour of 'Spiritism' seems to me to prove that they receive their messages from 'spirits,' and none of them can tell us what a 'spirit' is, or how a 'spirit,' which is something differing from matter, can act upon matter, or how you can have intelligence apart from an organism. Such questions as these do not trouble them much; at all events, they do not give us a rational answer to them."

"But they say they receive messages from the dead," went on Uncle Joe.

"Yes, I know; but I should like to ask how many of the dead ever learnt the spiritualistic language? How they come to know that three knocks on a table means 'yes' and two 'no'? And how does the medium manage to get into communication with the spirits until they have learnt the language of 'spiritism'? And if they can communicate without the aid of such language, how is it they cannot communicate direct with their parents and friends without the aid of the medium?"

"Well, but the 'mediums' say that they can call up spirits from the vasty deep, and they will come. They tell us of the spirit of John King and others who appeared before a large number of people."

"But have you not noticed that when these ghosts appear they come like the ghost of Hamlet's father—armed from head to foot—they don't leave their clothes behind them? Now, I am like Artemus Ward, I can understand the ghost of my great-grandfather; but, for the life of me, I cannot understand the ghost of my great-grandfather's overcoat."

Aunt Jane looked at me and smiled. Evidently she appreciated the joke, but she made no observation.

"But Spiritualists claim most extraordinary things as being done through the aid of these mediums," said Uncle Joe.

"Again, I say, I know. They tell us of a fat woman, named Mrs. Guppy, being transported through the air, and coming through the roof of a house and falling on to a table before the wondering gaze of a company of credulous believers. They tell us of flowers jumping out of a flower-bed, floating through the air, and landing in a vase on a table; but they don't tell us of any useful service these spirits ever perform."

"Is that so?"

"No spirit ever knows more than the medium through whom he is supposed to communicate his messages; and if the spirit of Shakespeare is ever called up, he talks no more wisely than a superannuated tub-thumper. He never, under any circumstances, says anything to remind us of the profound philosophy of Hamlet, or Prospero, or King Lear."

"But mediums tell us that the 'spirits' can communicate to us facts than nobody but we ourselves could possibly know."

"Indeed. Have you ever heard of a 'spirit' who could tell us what is going to happen to us an hour after he has communicated his message?"

"The wisest man on earth cannot do that."

"Well, then, you think that 'spiritism' is mainly composed of trickery and fraud," said Uncle Joe.

"Certainly, I do; there may be certain psychological phenomena that happen that we do not understand, but that is no reason why we should jump to the conclusion they are produced by spirits. Besides, have you ever thought of this? All the Spiritualist mediums that have been exposed have been in possession of 'the paraphernalia' of their trade, such as 'spirit hands' affixed to musical-boxes, spirit photographs, and other appliances of their profession. Let me quote from the late James Thomson (B.V.), the poet and philosopher, who said in his *Satires and Profanities* (p. 167):—

Can anything be darker and more debasing in a so-called civilized home and country than this Spiritism has proved itself from the beginning until now? I have yet to learn that the whole of the world of spirits, now for many years at the beck and call of countless mediums, professional and private, has ever dictated or written a single great sentence, revealed a single great truth, discovered a single important fact. Nothing but the dreariest drivel, or delirium, the most wretched and imbecile juggling tricks, with all sorts of evasions, and deceptions, and lies."

"There, I think that is a very good summing up of the case as it presents itself to the mind of a Freethinker like myself. But you, as a Christian, are entitled to take your own view of the subject."

"Yes," said Uncle Joe, "and though I may not be logical, as you say, I've got brains enough to see through such 'trickery of the spirits' and their mediums as have been revealed in the exposures we have had from time to time in the police-courts and other less public places."

"Did you ever hear a lecture on the subject?"

"Yes. I heard the late Dr. George Sexton when he was a 'Spiritualist'; and I heard my old friend, the late George W. Foote, in debate with Dr. Sexton on the subject for two nights in 1874 at the old Hall of Science. Dr. Sexton was a very clever man, and if anything could have been said from a scientific point of view worth saying, Dr. Sexton was the man to have said it. But he relied almost exclusively on the point that man had 'an inherent desire to live again.' But that proves nothing. I may desire to have five thousand a year, but that doesn't prove that I shall get it. Does it?"

"Certainly not. No; I shall have to ask my friend Williams some questions about his Spiritualism when next I see him, and if he tells me anything worth remembering I will let you know."

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

PIONEER LEAFLETS.

What is the Use of the Clergy?
What Will You Put in Its Place?

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Price 1s. 6d. per 100. Postage 3d.

One With Another.

THERE are those who believe in Christ, and even of their number some who endeavour truly to serve Him in accordance with his precepts. They find in the exaltation of their religious fervour a sufficient end in life to prepare for the life to come, and they live as it were removed from the world, although pertinent thereto. Indeed, the more sincere do many works of goodliness in following their Master, rendering aid to the helpless, making gifts to the poor, and showing gentleness and kindness in their dealing with all men, whom they regard as their brothers. These, in spite of their too frequent resemblance to their Master's poverty in the paucity of their worldly goods, seem to reap a goodly harvest of happiness.

There are those who follow Mammon, and whose days are spent in the accumulation of golden wealth. In these times they differ from the God's follower's of ancient days who used to worship the true gold itself, and were never so happy as in the contemplation of a huge or small pile of coin which they possessed. And since many coins were of good workmanship, it is not to be understood that it was the power of coined metal alone which to them was blessed, but that they took pleasure also in the contemplation of the many forms which human ingenuity had given to the shining substance itself. The coin is but a symbol now. It is but a melancholy matter to possess, and its chief significance is the power over his fellows which is wielded by its fortunate owner. Ever in the pursuit of more power, ever in the seeking for greater possibility of possession, and not in its true sense exercise of that power, these spend their lives. Do they not reap a measure of happiness, proportionate though it may be, to the favour of their God?

Again, there are those who deify life itself, and by life they usually mean human life, although they delude themselves with the belief that they worship all organisms as an expression of the Godlike attribute. These spend their lives much in dreaming of schemes for the improvement of the conditions under, and in spite of which, man finds it possible for a short three score years and ten to fan the flickering divine spark. They do more; often by some slight scratchings, the work to which their short duration is devoted, they add their meagre share to the shaping of the monster—Life. The very hopelessness of their gigantic task, and the scant development which has taken place during these many centuries, should appal them, yet they seem to be satisfied—hardly happy.

There is also the great subordinate class who labour, and whose mere existence in the flesh is devoted to the constant striving after the continuance of their sordid living itself. These are by far the most numerous, although considered and treated as the class of least worth. However, individuals pass thence into the other classes occasionally, and breathe the new life of enthusiasm into the fallacious, exhaustive strivings of those other classes.

The artist lives for his art alone, and he is but a member of this class who struggle for continuance; but he is the more noble since he will not be denied the actual exercise of such ability as lies within him, and the glorious desire to attain some goal ever farther distant as he advances towards it. He it is who reaps the harvest of reward, holding credence in the true worth of his aim, the pure joy of his efforts, and the constant irritations of his failures.

All life strives constantly. It seems that fatigue must be the precursor of new force, and new force is that most generally desired.

The mere lust of pleasure cannot bring joyousness one cubit nearer; but the pursuit of an ideal, true or false though it may be, lends that illusion which is so necessary to make life bearable.

The sadness of civilization is not so much consequent upon the constant striving for the achievement of some perfectly hopeless ideal, inasmuch as it is a truism that struggle is the most sane form of pleasure. The misfortune of our human strivings is that so many of us are bound about with the cords of those old falsehoods which have been placed upon us in the time of our innocent, guileless, unsuspecting youth. From these it is so hard to escape that each and all

strive rather one with another than one beside the other in a rank that marches to a common goal. The falsehood, nay, the very canker of death, which lurks in our system of morals, our system of commerce, our very ambition, so evilly directed from ages past, darkens with sorrow the name of civilization. And yet it seems impossible that there could ever be agreement amongst us with regard to the value of any ideal. Alas! Ever striving one with another; illusion based upon illusion in a never-ending scale leads us up and down, but does not direct us one and all along a certain path.

And, in consequence, we have in all these ages contrived that poor, dignified fallacy which we pleasantly term the civilized world.

G. E. FUSSELL.

N. S. S. Annual Conference.

Report of Business Meeting.

DESPITE the many and almost unprecedented difficulties now attending a Conference in London, the fact that seventeen out of twenty-one Branches should be represented points to a re-awakened interest in our Cause throughout the country.

The following London Vice-Presidents were present: Messrs. W. H. Baker, T. Gorniot, W. Heaford, J. T. Lloyd, W. Leat, A. B. Moss, Jas. Neate, C. G. Quinton, Victor Roger, T. Shore, H. Silverstein, S. Samuels, T. J. Thurlow, F. Wood; Miss Kough, Miss Stanley, and Mrs. Rolf.

Our Provincial Vice-Presidents representing their respective Branches were: R. Chapman, J. G. Dobson, J. Hammond, F. E. Willis, and E. Clifford Williams.

The Branches represented were: Bethnal Green, Birmingham, Battersea, Glasgow, Goldthorpe, Kingsland, Liverpool, Manchester, Newcastle, North London, Nuneaton, Portsmouth, South Shields, South London, Swansea, Southampton, and West Ham.

Our venerable friend, Mr. G. Alward, of Grimsby, was present.

Mr. J. Holmes, of Wantage, presented a beautiful offering of flowers and foliage, which decorated the platform at the evening meeting.

The roll having been called, the Agenda was proceeded with down to No. 4, the election of the President, followed by that of the Vice-Presidents. Freedom of thought usually necessitates a divergence of opinion, and as these motions, if carried straight through, would have been in opposition to No. 8, the scheme for re-organization standing in the President, Mr. Cohen's name, a quite unusually heated discussion arose, wasting a considerable amount of valuable time, and leading to an early adjournment.

At the afternoon session, "cool patience" having been sprinkled upon the atmosphere during the adjournment, it was agreed unanimously that certain important items should be put to the meeting again.

Re the minutes of the last Conference, on the motion of the Birmingham delegates, it was resolved that a full report of this and future Conference deliberations be supplied to all Branches.

Mr. F. A. Davies temporarily occupied the chair during the re-election of Mr. Cohen as President, and other official elections were also confirmed. Motion No. 7 *re* the revised rules of the Society was carried, and the next item being Mr. Cohen's scheme for re-organization, the services of Mr. Davies were requisitioned again to give the necessary opportunity for explanation and discussion.

Many complications and much discussion arose on Clause A. Suggestions that the matter be referred to the Executive, and many amendments threatened to occupy the already extended time.

Eventually Mr. Heaford rose to support Motion 9, Clause A, already moved as an amendment to the President's scheme, with an addendum that the matter be brought up before the Interim Conference. Here opinion was again divided and the amendment lost. Mr. Baker suggested that a special committee be formed, composed of delegates from as many Branches as could be brought together to discuss the whole matter and report. Mr. Cohen suggested that a committee of seven be nominated by this Conference.

Finally, the Chairman made a suggestion, with which Mr. Cohen concurred, that a committee be formed of representatives from each of the three oldest London and four oldest Provincial Branches, including the President and Secretary.

It was finally agreed that the report of the Committee should be printed and issued to all members of the Society, and a special Conference convened in a central position to discuss fully, and finally endorse or reject the scheme.

Motion No. 12 by Mr. Cohen was also remitted to this Committee.

The time for the evening meeting having arrived, the remaining motions on the Agenda were remitted to the Executive and the proceedings terminated.

E. M. V.

Correspondence.

FREETHOUGHT AND THE ARMY.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—After being in the Army now for twelve months, it appears to me that a grand field for the propagation of our cause lies amongst the millions of men that now constitute our land forces. Before I was fined £2 and, after six days' imprisonment, "handed over," I was under the impression that it was a great rarity to find a soldier who did not state his belief in some religion or other, especially on the recruiting form. Really, such is not the case, however, and avowed sceptics are quite commonly found amongst all ranks, officers as well as n.c.o.'s and men.

Nearly all the soldiers whom I have shown this paper to were quite unaware of its existence, and it was quite a treat for them to read its contents. As a matter of fact religion has buttressed itself in the Services, like it has always done, when opportunity offers, by means of persecution and penalties. It is a truism to state that not one quarter of the men would attend "divine service" if they could go out or be sure of having the time off instead. So far as my experience goes, attendance at Church is considered duty, and those who are caught evading it are liable to punishment equally with those who commit "crimes." A few weeks ago, through some order made officially, every man in our company was deputed to attend the special place of worship that he had named himself as belonging to, but instead of this occasion being regarded with great solemnity and exactness, no greater mirth was ever caused on a parade by n.c.o.'s in charge making fun of the various religions. As I know you require brevity, I had better conclude with saying that no greater evidence of the progress Freethought has made in the last half century exists than the poor position religion has been relegated to by the rank and file of the Army.

LUX.

Inspiration.

A SONNET.

MUCH had I wondered how it might be shown
That those who told the story of our Lord,
And penned the Gospel record of his word,
Were moved by powers to other men unknown;
And many times when daylight long had flown,
Have pored o'er ancient volumes amply scored,
With proof on proof the doubting mind t' afford,
Yet still retained those doubtings of my own.
Then glad was I to learn, by Matthew faced,
That Mary knew not Joseph ere Christ's birth;
And then, in wonder, follow him, to find
Christ's line through *Joseph* back to David traced;
For sure such reas'ning cometh not from earth,
But speaks the fulness of the Godhead's mind!

G. H. BOSWORTH.

Without philosophers, without some few virtuous men who seem to be of a different nature from the rest of mankind, the worship of a wicked divinity would surely be established over every part of the earth.—*Goldsmith.*

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, Right Hon. John M. Robertson, M.P., "War Aims."

OUTDOOR.

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

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

KINGSLAND BRANCH N. S. S. (Corner of Ridley Road): 11.30, Mr. J. W. Marshall, "God's Omnipotent Impotence."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Parliament Hill Fields): 3.15, Mrs. Rosetti, A Lecture.

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

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

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

SOUTHAMPTON BRANCH N. S. S. (Waverley Hall, St. Mary's Road): 11, Members are urged to attend. Business very important. Delegates Report of Conference and other important Discussion.

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

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