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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS.

	Page.
<i>Christianity and Human Nature.—The Editor</i> - - -	613
<i>"Who Giveth Us the Victory?"—J. T. Lloyd</i> - - -	614
<i>The Kaiser's Downfall.—Mimmermus</i> - - -	615
<i>Faith and Food.—Arthur B. Moss</i> - - -	616
<i>Religion After the War.—W. Mann</i> - - -	621
<i>Modern Methods of Salving the "Soul."—Keridon</i> - - -	622
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

## Views and Opinions.

### Christianity and Human Nature.

In the *Freethinker* for November 3 I wrote a defence of Christians against the statements of their religious friends." The defence was intended to be ironical, but some of my readers failed to detect the irony, for which I am quite ready to take full responsibility. I evidently failed to make myself clear, and that is, or ought to be, the unpardonable sin with a writer. But there was a serious purpose beneath the, perhaps I had better say, intended, irony of my writing. I wished to arouse in Christian minds a recognition of the truth that a great deal of the pulpit talk about religion and character is an impertinence and an insult. I quite fail to see anything but an insult in the saying that neither family, nor friends, nor country, nor humanity at large can rouse to the highest and nerve to the noblest without there is added the belief in God and Devil, in heaven and hell. I said, and I believe, that the Christian no more needs these extra incentives than does the Freethinker. And I put in a plea for the sanity and health of human nature, apart from all supernatural incentives of beliefs and for a fundamental unity of impulse and motive.

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### Creed and Conduct.

Therefore, I must confess to a little surprise on Dr. Lyttelton saying in last week's *Freethinker* that I "assume.....the one grand test of a religion is the character of its votaries." I neither assume nor believe anything of the kind. And I think I can defy Dr. Lyttelton to find in anything I have ever written ground for such an inference. In reply to the statements of Christians concerning the beneficial influence of Christianity on character, I have pointed out how certain deplorable actions have resulted from Christian belief, and that reply seems to me quite justifiable. But I have protested over and over again that, even though every Christian were a monument of virtue, it would not prove the truth of Christian doctrines or the sanity of Christian beliefs. There is no common denominator between good conduct and belief in the divinity of Jesus, the existence of God, or heaven or hell. Feeding the hungry and clothing the naked may be good work, but it will not prove the resurrection of Jesus; nor can you prove the existence of God by distributing coals and blankets. My case is that human goodness, in all its forms and in all its degrees of development, is indepen-

dent of religion. My proof is that it exists in all its forms and in all degrees of development apart from religion. And my further statement is that, instead of religious belief leading to moral development, it is moral development that humanizes and modifies religious belief. Finally, I do not test religion by its influence on character. I only cite illustrative disproof of the statement that its influence is universally beneficial. My main charge against religion is that its doctrines are either demonstrably untrue or completely unverifiable.

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### A Question of Relevancy.

Dr. Lyttelton reminds us that to deny the claim that Christianity did work an astounding change in human character is to "fly in the face of the only evidence in the matter which is worth anything, namely, the testimony of 'holy and humble men.'" These "all refer to Christ, and what right have we to say they are wrong?" Now this raises a direct issue, and on it I have to remark simply that by itself the evidence is quite valueless. And here I must refer Dr. Lyttelton to my article of November 17, which I think is vital to the issue, and to which no answer has been returned. If human testimony possesses the quality of infallibility ascribed to it by Dr. Lyttelton how are we to discriminate the true from the false? And if the cloud of witnesses is trustworthy in this one case why not in others? Surely, unless we do question testimony, even when given by honest witnesses, we shall end by coming very near the ridiculous. All that Dr. Lyttelton's case proves is that a number of people ascribe a certain change of temper or mental attitude to Christ. That is too plain to admit of denial. It is equally true that other people quite as honest ascribe their recovery from certain diseases to "cures" that can be shown to be quite useless. What I have asked Dr. Lyttelton for is evidence that his witnesses were correct in their diagnosis of the causes of their own mental states. What he does is to repeat the diagnosis and to tell me that it was made by good men. It is not the honesty of the witnesses, but the relevancy of the evidence that is challenged. To deny the existence of the kind of testimony cited would be stupid. Every Salvation Army or revival meeting will supply instances. But it is surely futile to deny the possibility of error or the need for verification.

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### Is Humility Christian?

Here I am pulled up by the remark that faith in Christ "produced a new virtue"—Humility. Now that, I admit, if correct, is a remarkable, nay, a unique achievement. To give to an existing quality a greater or lesser value is not unusual; but to produce a new virtue is something unprecedented and unmatched. But as Dr. Lyttelton goes on to say the quality was so "rare before the time of Christ, that there was no word for it in Greek," perhaps, after all, what was intended was that Christianity, emphasizing the importance of humility, gave it a new value in the scale of human qualities.

But is even this quite accurate? Dr. Lyttelton gives only a negative description of what he means by humility, and all I gather is that it implies an absence of arrogance and conceit, and the presence of gentleness. And here, surely, Dr. Lyttelton has overlooked the Buddha and his teaching. He does cite Aristotle, but omits Epictetus, whose description of a good man was one who is quiet concerning himself, despises praise, cares nothing for censure so long as his own conscience upholds him, and that he should neither blame nor accuse, is as fine as anything ever preached by a Christian. So also is Marcus Aurelius overlooked with his "Shall anyone hate me, let him look to it; but I will be gentle and benevolent towards every man, and ready to show even him his mistake." The Dhamanapada describes the good man as one who is tolerant with the intolerant, mild with the violent, and free from greed among the greedy. Says Lao-Tsze, "I have three precious things which I hold fast and prize—compassion, economy, and humility." In the Book of the Dead the soul of the Egyptian cries, "I am not swollen with pride." "Avoid pride and arrogance," says Cicero. In the Talmud we have, "He who humiliates himself will be lifted up." Indeed, even amongst people such as the Fijians, the Tonga Islanders, and other primitive peoples, humility often has its place.

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#### Preaching and Practice.

As a teaching, then, humility, in the better sense of the phrase, is not peculiar to Christianity: What of its practice? Was that more pronounced among Christians than among others? Why, in this respect, Buddhism and Confucianism leaves Christianity hopelessly in the rear. Dr. Lyttelton instances St. Paul. But Paul's character after his conversion, was exactly the same that it was before. The same zeal, the same qualities that made him an ardent persecutor made him a zealous propagandist. And when we are told that the winning quality of the Christian graces captured the world I am driven to ask, Where? There is not, so far as I know, a shred of evidence that the world was impressed by the mildness, the humility, or the wisdom of Christians. It was impressed by their fanaticism, their hatreds, and their quarrelsomeness. Look at the Christian nations since? Let anyone take a map of the world and mark the places "owned" by Christian England. Have these been "acquired" by humility? Is it, as Jesus said, a fulfilment of the Biblical "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth"? Even beneath the professed humility of pope and priest and monk, is it very difficult to discern the most overbearing arrogance? Who but the Christian nations have covered the seas with battleships and the lands with armies? Whose example but theirs forced Japan into militaristic development, and is forcing China along the same road; and who but they have just concluded a war that has meant over twenty millions of killed and wounded? As a mere teaching, that of humility is not peculiar to Christianity. And one must surely close one's eyes to the records of the Christian peoples in all parts of the world before one can credit them with pre-eminence in the practice of a quality that was taught and practised before anything of Christianity was heard of.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

We are not endeavouring to chain the future, but to free the present. We are not forging fetters for our children, but we are breaking those our fathers made for us. We are the advocates of inquiry, of investigation, and thought. This of itself is an admission that we are not perfectly satisfied with all our conclusions—philosophy has not the egotism of faith. While superstition builds walls and creates obstructions, science opens all the highways of thought.—*Ingersoll*.

## "Who Giveth Us the Victory?"

Now that God's children are no longer slaughtering one another in the name of their common Father there is universal rejoicing. United thanksgiving services are being held in all parts of the country. Free Church ministers are invited to preach in Anglican Church pulpits, and a few Episcopal clergymen have had the courage to represent the God of love in Dissenting Chapels. A new era of ecclesiastical confraternity is confidently predicted as one of the most beneficial results of the War. Preaching in the Central Hall, Manchester, Dr. Clifford informed his hearers that "God was really ruling the world," and that peace had come as the direct result of negotiating with the Almighty rather than with the Germans. "The State was as Divine as the Church," he maintained, "and he did not recognize any great leader as having been specifically designated by God until the advent of President Wilson." Dr. Jowett, speaking at the Free Church Thanksgiving Service at the Albert Hall, said that they were gathered there "to consecrate a great victory by thankfully acknowledging that the springs of that victory are to be found in the power and favour of Almighty God." It is our duty, according to him, "to hallow the remembrance of a mighty conflict by vitally relating it to a Providence which has enlightened our counsels and blessed our arms." Dr. Fort Newton devoted a whole sermon to showing that "it is not a secular but a spiritual victory, won not by human but by Divine might." These preachers are not appalled in the least by the fact that Almighty God has permitted British casualties to reach the grand total of over three millions. Dr. Newton does, indeed, admit that our hearts, while overflowing with wonder and joy, are "touched to wistfulness at thought of what it has cost in sacrifice of our best"; but the keynote of his discourse is gratitude to heaven for so glorious a triumph of right over might. He says:—

The Lord reigns, and those who defied him are fallen. Thus much is manifest, if we have eyes to see and the inner clarity to divine the meaning of the hour. It is in this assurance, and with this insight, that we must face the crises of the future.

That extract alone proves Dr. Newton's unfitness for leadership. To characterize those who disagree with him as blind and inwardly dull is to betray the essential weakness of his case. We boldly assert that God's reign is either non-existent or a colossal farce; and we have as good a right to hold this opinion, to say the least, as the reverend gentleman has to hold his. During the last four years many who were zealous believers formerly have become deeply convinced Atheists. Very charitably Dr. Newton declares that such people have lost their way, but we are equally certain that they have found their way to an intelligent and intelligible interpretation of the world and its affairs. To them the War was no mystery, and the Germans have lost because, in the end, they were outnumbered and out-manœuvred by their enemies. It is perfectly true that the hour has brought many pressing issues, and that by far the most vital is "the inner contest which is to decide whether the ultimate outcome of all our struggle shall be a victory for faith or for unbelief." Already for many thousands in this country the outcome has been a distinct victory for Rationalism.

Let us examine a few of Dr. Fort Newton's propositions, as published in the *Christian Commonwealth* for November 20. The first is thus expressed: "Never in the long story of mankind has there been so august, so awful, a demonstration of the moral purpose of God in history." The reverend gentleman pretends not to be

quite sure whether there are unbelievers or not, but is absolutely sure, if there are, that they, as well as men of all faiths, "must have felt amidst the rush at the end the peace that comes of knowing, as Carlyle would say, that 'the great Soul of the World is just.' If the mills of God grind slowly, they grind exceeding fine, leaving dust and ashes where iniquity sat enthroned." Here again the reverend gentleman is completely at sea. Men of no faith recognize no great Soul of the World, just or unjust, no Divine purpose running through all history, no "one far-off Divine event, to which the whole creation moves." The only purpose in the world is man's, and whether this is good or bad depends upon those who cherish it. Dr. Newton represents God as employing one set of his children to inflict punishment upon another set. Germans are God's offspring quite as much as the British and their Allies; and yet in the great War the latter suffered almost as severely as the former, while for nearly four years the Father of all seemed to favour those who are now said to have defied him. A million and a half of Germans met their death on the battlefield; but is not the reverend gentleman aware that seven hundred thousand Britons lost their lives by the sword, and that their Allies lost of their best on a similar scale? If God's object was to overthrow Pan-Germanism, or Prussian militarism, why did he for so long a period appear to uphold it? If he sits as king for ever, there is no escape from the conclusion, as regards human life, that, in the words of Omar Khayyam:—

'Tis all a chequer board of Nights and Days,  
Where Destiny with Men for Pieces plays:  
Hither and thither moves, and mates, and slays,  
And one by one back in the closet lays.

It is easy for a preacher to affirm that God rules the world now that we have won the War; but what would he have said had the Germans been victorious, as only a few months ago there was every chance of their becoming? What about the victories won by Frederick the Great, who, in his way, was no less selfishly ambitious than William II., who has so ignominiously fallen? What about God's purpose in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870? Was the moral law triumphant in the result of that conflict?

Dr. Fort Newton declares further that the Divine purpose in history is social. He says that "if we had doubted this before we cannot doubt it to-day." The reasoning in support of this statement is puerile in the extreme. Bear in mind that the God whose moral purpose has been so overwhelmingly demonstrated by the War is said to be love, and the contention is that the ruthless killing of millions of fine young men has had the effect of enabling us to realize the solidarity of the human race. Listen:—

No isle of the sea, however remote, but has felt the shock of this vast tragedy. No man, no woman, no child on earth but has had added burdens laid upon him, upon her, as a direct result of the War. Vividly we have been made to realize that for good or for evil—for evil certainly, if not for good—we are members one of another, tied together by innumerable ties. For better or for worse, in joy and in tragedy, it has been shown us that humanity is one, and that we are brothers to the last man of us, for ever. If the solidarity of the race has been held as a theory, it is now revealed as a fact.

And the God of love got up the bloodiest war on record on purpose to convince us that we are all brothers, members one of another. That is how the Heavenly Father brings home to his children the splendid design of universal service which he has prepared for them.

This leads the City Temple oracle to expatiate on the mystic law of vicarious suffering, which law he finds beautifully exemplified on the Cross of Calvary. He is

persuaded that it is pre-eminently right for the innocent to suffer with and for the guilty. He plays upon the feelings of his audience by saying that no one can deny that law, "remembering our gay and gallant dead who gave all, and now lie 'dark to the triumph which they died to gain,' who suffered not for their own sins, but in obedience to a red law which runs through all the life of God and man, revealed in all its splendour by the Divine Sufferer on the Cross." Far be it from us to suggest that Dr. Newton does not believe all this, though it seems to us utterly incredible. It would be the sheerest folly to deny that the world is full of vicarious suffering, and that much of it is most honourably borne by those who are absolutely innocent; but it is an indisputable fact that the need for it, in the overwhelming majority of instances, is rooted in injustice and wrong. Had the world been ruled by a just and loving God, there could have been no war; and yet Dr. Newton holds that God reigns because we have won, which clearly indicates that if the Germans had been the conquerors it would have been a proof that God does not reign.

Towards the end of the sermon the reverend gentleman describes God, not as the ruler of the world, but as one of the fighters in it. He quotes the following verse:—

The sorrows of God must be hard to bear  
If he really has love in his heart,  
And the hardest part in the world to play  
Must surely be God's part.

If God there be, he is surely the most unfortunate of all beings, his self-styled servants being his worst enemies.

J. T. LLOYD.

## The Kaiser's Downfall.

Why squat here spinning crafty labyrinths,  
Jetting your filthy network o'er the globe?  
You think to bind the future? Poor grey spinner!  
Fate, the blind housewife, with her busy broom,  
Shall shrivel at one sweep your giant web,  
And leave a little naked scuttling spider!

—Israel Zangwill.

THE last of the great despots has gone. William, King of Prussia and German Emperor, who shook the mailed fist on the European stage for a generation, has gone amid universal execration. A king after Charles the First's own heart, the last of the feudal monarchs, he was the best-hated man in the world. Till the day of his abdication the Kaiser associated the Christian God with his rule, and invoked that deity as the witness of his authority. Democracy, which had frightened the White Czar, and which had overawed the Sultan of Turkey, crouched quietly at the foot of his throne. Now, he is unpacking, in a strange house in another country, from a handbag, the battered crown of Germany.

A country which builds upon an outworn superstition must, sooner or later, rue it. If there was one thing certain about Germany it was that it acquiesced far too long in this divine right of kings. A hundred years ago the poet Shelley pointed the finger of scorn at "king-deluded Germany," and the terrible aftermath was seen in the world-war promoted by a neurotic degenerate who imagined himself as an instrument of "God" divinely appointed to the task of establishing Teutonic supremacy. "There is only one master in this country, That is I," he said arrogantly, "who opposes me I shall crush in pieces." And again, "God will guide the German people through battle to victory, to the goal appointed to the German people by Providence." It was the language of Tamerlane, or

that of the megalomaniac obsessed to the point of self-deification. It ended with the royal oak of the monarchical forest crashing to the ground and dragging the kingly saplings in its train.

The Kaiser was fond of referring to his great ancestor, Frederick the Great. William the Second was the ninth King of Prussia, and Frederick was the third. There the resemblance ended. Dining with Queen Victoria, after the publication of his history, Macaulay said "the queen talked of her poor ancestor, James the Second." "Not your Majesty's ancestor," replied Macaulay, "but your predecessor." William does not descend directly from Frederick, but from the great king's nephew, Frederick William, who succeeded him, and allowed his Army to fall into such a state as afterwards to become an easy prey to Napoleon at Jena.

As for William's "sainted grandsire," he was, to use Bismarck's caustic phrase, "a lathe painted to look like iron." His mental processes were slow, and not in the least clever, like so many present-day politicians. It is said that, whereas Bismarck required the largest-sized hat, his Imperial master was accommodated with one that would have fitted a schoolboy. The ex-Kaiser's versatility came to him through his mother, the Princess Royal of England, and the daughter of Prince Albert of Saxe Coburg Gotha, the husband of Queen Victoria.

Powerful as he was, the Kaiser never realized one of his dearest ambitions. It was always his wish to be not German Emperor, but the Emperor of Germany. He found, however, the other Teuton princes less amenable than the democracy of his nation, and to the end he remained the uncrowned German Emperor, not the crowned Emperor of Germany. When the subject was discussed in the presence of Bismarck, the old statesman said, "Sausage is sausage, whatever the name." He had made a nation in twenty years, and was indifferent to mere titles.

Such a man as the ex-Kaiser brooked no rivals. When he ascended the throne, the mighty figure of Bismarck dwarfed him, and he dropped the pilot. Yet the revelations of the Moltke-Harden trial showed that the "god-inspired" monarch was the puppet of the subtlest and most insidious of influences.

It was the German military leaders, and the consenting Kaiser, who made the World-War, which cost millions of lives and countless treasure, and has shaken civilization to its base. And the God-anointed William was an infamous man. He might have spoken the word that would have saved Belgium from martyrdom; he might have spared the innocent passengers on the *Lusitania* and other ships; he might have respected the civilians in the French and English towns. He might have conducted the War in such a spirit that his name should not have become a hiss and a byword throughout the civilized world. The crowning dishonours of his soldiers were his also, for he was their over-lord. Napoleon passed through Europe like a tempest, but wherever he passed the political and social air was left cleaner and better. For a generation he was our incessant and untiring foe, but he fought us in such a way that Englishmen can hang his portrait in their houses, and stand with respect by the tomb in the Invalides. But William has fallen so low that there is none so poor to do him reverence.

Germany is immeasurably better without such a monarch as the God-anointed Kaiser. Freed at last, may the old German spirit awaken, and the finer elements of the Teutonic character restore her to her rightful place among the democracies of the world.

MIMNERMUS.

## Faith and Food.

WE have now, I believe, all received our ration books, probably for the last time, on account of the approaching peace, and during the next few weeks we shall be considering how to use our coupons to the best advantage. Many of the people I come in contact with waste their coupons because they do not take the trouble to ascertain how to use them on all occasions, and what to buy with them and get the best value for their money. I can understand some Christians who believe in prayer and faith wasting coupons, supplied to them by the Food Controller for their advantage; but I cannot understand practical Secularists making such a blunder, especially as information can be so easily obtained. I have been wondering lately how some prominent Christians use their coupons. For instance, the Lord Bishop of London is a bachelor. He has four meat coupons to use per week. Now suppose he spends two meat coupons from Monday to Thursday, and has a fish dinner on Friday, he has only two coupons left for Sunday's dinner. We can imagine him discarding for the nonce his shovel, hat, and gaiters, and, attired like a modern young curate, gliding into one of Lyons' restaurants and spending half a coupon four days a week on a nice light meat dinner; or, if he felt especially hungry, venturing into one of Lockhart's establishments and going in for a good substantial meal of beefsteak pudding, cabbage, potatoes, haricot beans, and some rice pudding and jam, for about one shilling. But still he would only have two coupons left for his Sunday joint. Now, we cannot suppose for a moment that the Right Rev. Father-in-God would pool his coupons with those of his servants, and thus get a bit more from each of them, for that would be a distinct infringement of the order of the Food Controller. True, as a follower of the meek and lowly Jesus, in principle his Lordship is a Communist, and believes that Christians should have everything in common—except, perhaps, ten thousand a year and a palace to live in.

We know that it was said of old that a man with the "faith of a mustard seed could remove a mountain," and no doubt the Bishop's income and palace are obstacles that he finds no difficulty in removing metaphorically when ever occasion arises. If, however, he uses two coupons during the week on "uncooked meat," I repeat, he would only have two coupons left for Sunday's dinner, and unless he dealt with a butcher who extended favour to a high dignitary of the Church, which, in a Christian community, is almost an "unthinkable proposition," as politicians say, he could only get eight pennyworth of uncooked meat for his Sunday's joint. Now that would be distinctly hard on a Right Reverend Father-in-God. But suppose he had meatless dinners all the rest of the week, he would still only have one shilling and fourpence to spend on his Sunday's joint. And when we remember that a prime cut is something like one shilling and eightpence to two shillings a pound, the Bishop's messenger or housekeeper would not require a large handbag in which to convey it to the Episcopal Palace. What I want to know is, how by faith could the Lord Bishop increase the quantity of his uncooked meat if he dealt with a scrupulously honest butcher? And in what way could prayer and fasting help him?

Of course, I know that if the noble Lord Bishop were hard-pressed he might get some sheep's-heart, some tripe, or some black sausages without coupons, but we could scarcely expect him to do this on many occasions, especially as the food controller supplies him with four coupons a week to spend on "uncooked meat."

But, joking apart, there is a tragic side to the great food problem that is not understood or appreciated by the vast majority of the people. People with small fixed incomes, large families, and with little or no War bonus, find it extremely difficult to get enough food to maintain a healthy existence. They may have plenty of coupons but not enough money to pay the high prices that are charged for the common necessities of life nowadays. Thousands of poor people, therefore, have to subsist on food that has very little nourishment in it, and I have noticed of late that hundreds of poor women and children appear to be very anæmic and weak, and I have no doubt that is one of the reasons so many of them have fallen an easy prey to that strange but malignant fever called "Spanish influenza."

Most of the poor people I refer to are very religious. They may not attend church or chapel with any degree of regularity or display many outward signs of piety, but the mere mention of the name "Infidel" or "Atheist" would nevertheless arouse such a feeling of horror and detestation in their minds that any rational person would be easily satisfied they had not outgrown many of the primitive superstitions of their forefathers. These poor people have plenty of faith; but as a man by taking thought "cannot add one cubic inch to his stature," so neither can these people by faith nor prayer add one pennyworth of value to their coupons, or one shilling per week to their scanty incomes. Some people say that the masses were never better clothed nor fed than they have been during the four years of this terrible War. That may be true. I, for one, will not dispute it. But it has to be remembered that from 1881 up to 1914 hundreds of thousands of children—nay, millions—have had to be fed first by voluntary efforts like "the *Referee* Children's Dinner Fund," and afterwards at the ratepayers' expense in the various schools throughout the kingdom. And though they prayed every day to their Heavenly Father to "Give us this day our daily bread," if it had not have been for the generosity of the ratepayers they would never have got it. And I expect in a few months' time, when their fathers return home from the Front, and find some difficulty in getting work at anything like a subsistence wage, the children will have to be again fed in the schools at the ratepayers' expense. And how does prayer or faith assist them in this case? I remember once reading a poem in the *National Reformer*, over thirty years ago, three of the lines indelibly fixed themselves on my memory, and I have thought of them many times since. The poem was by Dr. Arthur Lynch, the Irish Member of Parliament, who has proved himself such a fine patriot in this great War. The lines ran something like this:—

The cry went up for bread,  
"O my lord, it's a frightful doom,  
To be praying for bread in a mother's womb."

And whatever people may say to the contrary, it is a painful fact that thousands of children have been fated to hunger from the very moment of their conception. Their mothers have been half starved, and they have come into a world in which hunger and misery have been their chief inheritance. Let us, in the name of Humanity, see that children in the future have a brighter prospect of a healthy and happy existence, and we may be sure that this result will be brought about, not by faith in the goodness of God or belief in the efficacy of prayer, but by the thoughtful consideration of human beings for the children of the struggling masses, whose health and careful training will help so much towards making them the useful, intelligent, and happy citizens of a brighter and happier world than most of us have ever known.

ARTHUR B. MOSS.

## Acid Drops.

Now that the War is over, and we have had prayers and thanksgiving services from the Christians engaged in it, some of them are settling down to business and getting ready for more war if necessary. Thus, the *Daily Telegraph* of November 22, reports that a three years' battleship building programme has been approved by President Wilson for the United States. The *Daily Telegraph* cites the *Central News* as saying:—

Should Great Britain decline to limit the building of warships on the ground that she has large colonies to guard, then Congress would wish to be in a position to authorize the immediate building of big fighting ships. Should Great Britain consent to cut down her programme, then the United States would consent to limit her fleet to its existing strength.

The extent to which these Christian nations trust each other is quite touching. But why limitation of armaments? The only way to prevent war is the abolition of armaments. The other plan only makes getting ready for war a less costly process.

Miss Annie B. Weichick, in a letter to the *Daily Record* on the "Real Jewish Spirit," says the Church of Scotland would do better to leave the Jews to themselves to find their own way to heaven. If these believers in God cannot agree here, how do they expect to get on with each other when they meet in heaven?

To commemorate the signing the Armistice several friends of Stirling Royal Infirmary have sent substantial donations to the funds of the Institution. This is a much more sensible method of thanksgiving than going to church to thank God for what he didn't do.

Sabbatarianism is dying a slow but certain death. The *Church Times* for November 22 devotes a leading article to a discussion of "Sunday Newspapers," the first sentence in which is as follows:—"The time is past for protests against the existence of Sunday newspapers." So it is; but will not our able contemporaries go a step further and frankly admit that the time *ought* to be past for ecclesiastical opposition to the Sunday opening of places of entertainment? Sabbatarianism is a crime against humanity.

A case of "clerical poverty" was revealed at the inquest on the Rev. F. T. Minchall, Vicar of Cotheridge, Worcestershire, who was found neglected and dying from want and exposure. At the inquest the Dean of Worcester said the "case was not one of real poverty, for the deceased had enough to live on, and he was taken to the infirmary as a paying guest."

At a debating society discussion in North London on "My Favourite Book," one speaker selected the Bible and another pronounced in favour of his ration book.

The newspaper advertising campaign on behalf of the five million pound fund for the Church of England is being conducted with a vigour worthy of a better cause. Advertisements have appeared in a very large number of papers, provincial and metropolitan, and, obedient to the nod of the advertising managers, the editorial comments have been laudatory. The result is that the Church has muzzled most of the newspapers; for what self-respecting editor can afford to offend a good advertiser? Oh, the divine comedy!

It is not quite clear what "the business men of the Church" mean to do with the five million pounds they are asking for, should they get the money. Are the poor bishops to get a bonus to help them keep their palaces in first-class condition? Or may the organists, choristers, and church workers look for a living wage in the near future?

Miss Maude Royden, in movingly eloquent words, exonerates God from all responsibility for most of the suffering in the world, which would cease if *we* but did our duty;

but after carefully perusing the good lady's passionate tirade against the selfishness of society, we are bound to ask, "Where, then, does God come in at all?"

For stealing a shilling's worth of apples, a railway employee was fined forty shillings at Westminster. For a similar offence, Adam and Eve were not only punished, but their descendants were included in the punishment, and the effects are to be seen to-day. This is the orthodox view of justice.

Purple passages in the press are often a joy to readers. One of the best appeared recently in the *Daily Chronicle*, under the signature of the pious Mr. Harold Begbie. Describing the Free Church thanksgiving service held at the Albert Hall, at which the King and Queen were present, the writer said: "'Our Father,' led by Dr. Clifford, had new meaning." A hasty reader might assume that "Our Father" was crowded into a frock coat, and actually upon the platform.

Folly is like greatness. Some are born to it, and others easily acquire it. But whether a man is a fool through heredity or by acquisition, there is no need for him to advertise it—although that may be part of his folly; in which case his position is more than ever deplorable. Now, Mr. Arthur Mee, who was once connected with a child's encyclopædia, and who probably still thinks he is talking to children, tells the readers of the *Daily Chronicle* that the Allies have "saved mankind from the loss of faith in God." Mr. Mee should tell that to the marines, or to the soldiers, and he would undergo enlightenment. And Mr. Mee is as well informed as to the cause of the War as he is as to its results. "It is Professor Haeckel who helped to sow the seed of the war; it is the gospel of materialism according to Haeckel." Now, we are not defending Haeckel against Mee. That would be like protecting the sun from the glare of a candle. We are only exhibiting Mee. And one can imagine reasonable people reading such drivel and, if they believe in God, saying, "Thank God I'm not Mee."

But Mr. Mee writes, "deeper than we knew was the depth of the bottomless pit." And the man who can write that is capable of anything.

A Derbyshire clergyman, the Rev. G. Hazelhurst, recently declined to officiate in a marriage with a deceased wife's sister, although the husband had been a widower. He told the intending bride that such a marriage was "wicked and immoral." Subsequently the pair were married by a Wesleyan minister at Bakewell. It is a pity they did not go to the registrar. But it is a piece of impertinence for a Church of England clergyman, who is really a State official, to decline to carry out the law.

With the approval of Governor Burnquist, the Angelus, or daily minute of prayer, was adopted as an all-Minnesota observance about the middle of last month. If the course was pleasing to the Deity, he chose a strange way of signifying his approval, for a big forest fire followed, destroying a dozen Minnesota lives, and 100,000,000 dollars worth property.—*Truthseeker* (New York).

We know what Dr. Fort Newton, of the City Temple, thinks of God, but it would be much more interesting to discover what God thinks of Dr. Fort Newton. The reverend gentleman professes to be on the most intimate terms with the Supreme Being, and to possess the minutest information as to his daily doings. If God there were, how hugely amused he would be by the following description of himself:—

"Let us keep God out of the War," said an officer to me on a ship far out at sea. It cannot be done. He is here, as my dear dead teacher used to say, in the mud and litter of things, toiling, struggling, conquering. He is no spectator, no playwright, no looker-on at the human struggle. He is here in it all, through it all, sharing our bitterest woe.

Formerly, the divines were firm believers in the *omnipotence* of God, but henceforth it will be their duty to dwell upon

his *impotence* and consequent helplessness. Dr. Newton says that "God is limited," and Dr. Newton *knows*.

Innocence is always interesting—even in adults. We observe that Lord Crawford said in the House of Lords it was evidence of good management that he, "as an ordinary newspaper reader, was quite unaware that any censorship existed." Censorship of the Press is a poor business at best, and if our censorship had been as straightforward as the continental system, and left blanks where the excised passages once stood, everyone would have been aware of what was taking place, and the innocence of Lord Crawford would not have been exploited. But by closing the gaps in the articles, people were both misinformed and befooled.

A concert in aid of the Glasgow Prisoners of War Fund is to be held in the La Scala Picture House on Sunday, December 8. Let us hope there will be a large turn-out, and so justify the demand that this class of entertainment would be available every Sunday evening during the winter months.

Notwithstanding the protestations of the large and influential deputation from the Churches and other Christian organizations, Edinburgh Town Council have decided to provide Sunday evening concerts in the Waverley Market for overseas soldiers. Quite a knock-back to the Church, and a good hint to mind its own business.

The pulpits of our land are now ringing with extravagant pæans of thanksgiving and praise, the predominant note in which is "The Lord our God has given us a glorious victory." But has he? Is it not a fact that so long as the Germans had superior numbers and equipment we were far from winning, but that so soon as we had unity of command and could concentrate a superior force against our enemies the tide turned in our favour, and the end of the War came into sight? Nothing in history is more certain than this, that if there be a God he "is always on the side of the big battalions."

The attendance of the King and Queen at a Nonconformist thanksgiving service is a sign of the times. The *Daily News* was jubilant, and remarked that "King George might worship at Westminster Chapel with almost as much fitness as at Westminster Abbey or St. Paul's, for if he is an Episcopalian in England he is a Presbyterian in Scotland." Is the King a Catholic in Ireland, and a Mohammedan in India?

The clergy are sometimes accused of being quick-change artistes; but the following description in a daily paper of Dr. Clifford praying is really noteworthy: "At one moment this octogenarian looked like Homer, then like Darwin, then like Ulysses, and then like a nameless patriarch of Israel." It seems as if the reporter had been lunching freely.

The Vicar of St. Gabriel's Church, Cricklewood, has been appearing as "Hamlet" in a presentation of the play in the Church Hall. That is far better than acting the part of the Angel Gabriel.

The clergy tell us that the War was a chastisement from God for our sins. Some folk have turned this chastisement to their own financial benefit. At Christie's Sale Rooms recently a necklace of pearls was sold for £4,100, and a diamond and emerald ring for £2,850.

In a paragraph on the religious views of men in the public eye, the *Evening News* said Mr. Arthur Henderson is a Methodist, "who has had experience on the penitent form, and on the doormat at 10 Downing Street.

The conversion of the Chinese to Christianity goes on apace. A Chinaman at Gateshead Court was asked his religion, and replied: "Munition worker."

**O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.**

November 30, Maesteg; December 1, Ferndale; December 2, Llwynypia; December 8, Leicester; December 15, Nuneaton; December 22, Glasgow.

**To Correspondents.**

**J. T. LLOYD'S LECTURE ENGAGEMENTS.**—December 1, Swansea; December 8, Garw.

**T. BERRY.**—The "tangible results" of Freethought work are seen in the breaking down of the power of superstition and in the growth of a saner human kind. You are impressed by Parliament going to a Thanksgiving Service when the Armistice was declared. To us it seems like making God responsible for the War. And in that case the less honest men have to do with it the better. As one writer expressed it, a thanksgiving service now is like rejoicing in a cemetery.

**H. DAWSON.**—We know we have your good wishes. Still we appreciate your congratulation on our "sticking so successfully to the best of causes."

**J. SANDERSON.**—Paper was received all right. Thanks. Your having sent 600 back numbers of the *Freethinker* to the soldiers was excellent work.

**R. N. CRUDDAS.**—We sincerely hope the desire that your child, whom you have named Charles Bradlaugh, will grow up worthy the name. It will not be the parents' fault if events turn out otherwise.

**C. J.**—We are obliged by your interest in the *Freethinker* and our work.

**MAJOR WARREN.**—Pleased to hear from you. It is a pity that so many should attempt to exploit in the interests of superstition, the misery caused by the War, but one can expect nothing else.

**G. GERRARD.**—We hope you will be successful in linking up *Freethinker* readers in Chester with a view to organization. We appreciate your good wishes.

**D. SUTHERLAND.**—Literature has been sent. Yes, it is something to have pulled through the War; but our troubles are by no means over.

**MR. T. MARSON** writes:—"Enclosed please find P.O. for four shillings and fourpence which makes the cost of my *Freethinker*, for a year, threepence per week—than which it is worth much more. You have kept the flag flying throughout the War; I don't think there is an easy time ahead, but the *Freethinker* will pull through all right with its present staff to pilot it.

"**PHENIX**" (South Shields).—We intend reprinting a number of things as early as possible. Conditions in the printing trade have not yet improved, and may not for some time. However, we are getting on with things, as you will see. Your getting six new subscribers is good work, and with you we wish all our readers would do as well—or better.

**T. OSBORNE.**—There are numerous works that give a general reply to and a general explanation of Spiritualism. But it is foolish to attempt to "explain" a statement as presented to one without some means of checking it. With the best of intentions a statement may be unconsciously "coloured."

**GRATEFUL.**—We deeply appreciate your concern. But please see our comment on Mr. Rickard's letter in "Sugar Plums."

**F. SMITH.**—Sorry we are unable to find room for your letter. So soon as conditions permit our enlarging the paper more space will be available for correspondence.

**L. AUSTEN.**—We are pleased to have your congratulations on having pulled through the War. But are we through? We have some hard times immediately ahead, and having got through so far with safety we face the future without fear.

**S. W. ALABASTER.**—So soon as printed will see that you are supplied. Your letter contains excellent news. Thanks for what you are doing.

**A. W. SKILLING.**—An exposure of Pastor Russell appeared in the columns of *Truth*. The office of that paper could supply you with the dates. A libel action was threatened, but never occurred.

**W. BARNET.**—We are pleased you raised the question of Secular Education with your candidate. We are attending to the matter, and seeing he is supplied with the required information.

"**SCOTIA**" writes that several Glasgow secularists have now joined the Secular Education League. We hope more of them will follow this excellent example.

**SAPPER WALKER.**—Parcel is being sent; hope it will prove effective.

**RAMSGATE.**—We should be very pleased to visit Burnley and see what could be done, if arrangements could be made.

**J. DUNCANSON.**—Pleased to learn that Mr. Palmer had a successful meeting in South London on Sunday last.

*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.*

*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.*

**"Freethinker" Sustentation Fund.**

Previously acknowledged:—£425 19s. 1d.; R. D. Side, 10s.; 2nd Lieut. H. W. Side, 5s.; Ede B. Side, 5s.; W. Barlow, 1s. 6d.; W. Lamb, 10s.; J. S. Norman, 10s.; G. W. R., 5s.; F. C., 5s.; H. J. Slack, 5s.; E. J. P., 2s. 6d.; E. Rickard, 2s. 6d.; W. Ambrose, 2s. 6d.; F. H. Curle, 3s.; T. Hart, 2s. 3d.; W. Cutler, 9d.; T. M. Brown, 10s.; Manchester Branch, N. S. S. (per A. C. Rosetti), 12s.; Mr. Goodman, 10s.; H. L. Wheeler, 2s.; Scotty, 2s.; C. J., £2.; L. May, 2s.; R. Weston, 1s.; T. Marson, 4s. 4d.; F. (Aberdeen), 10s.; C. Williams, 2s.; "My Bit," 1s.; Phoenix, 10s.; Four Stalwarts (Naval), 10s.; Old Soldier, 10s.; Corpl. A. L. Smith, 4s. 9d.; H. L. T. Wheeler, 2s.; Mrs. Jortan, 2s. 6d.; Mrs. H. W. Irving, 5s.; Pansyite, 2s. 6d.

Per A. Vanderhout:—F. Hollingsworth, 2s.; B. Garcia, 2s. 6d.; G. Austin, 2s.; F. Howell, 2s. 6d.; W. Bennett, 2s.; D. Aberdeen, 5s.; V. Collins, 5s.; W. Smith, 5s.; A. Vanderhout, 5s.

Per D. Sutherland:—G. Gerrard, £2 13s. 6d.; W. G. Mortimer, 3s.; W. Carter, 1s.; A. Slee, 2s. 6d.; A. F. Trickey, 1s. 6d.; Old Cestrian, 10s.; W. M. Tugman, 1s.

J. C. Edwards, 2s. 6d.; D. Sutherland, 5s.

Per Sec. Manchester Branch, collection, 16s. 2d.

Total, £444 os. 10d.

This Fund closes on December 17.

**Sugar Plums.**

Sunday's meetings at Leeds were a pronounced success. The handsome Town Hall, one of the finest municipal buildings in the North of England, was well filled both afternoon and evening with an interested and appreciative audience. Every point in the lectures was well taken, and quite an ovation was given to Mr. Cohen when he sat down after replying to opposition at the close of the evening lecture. The meetings had been well advertised, and everything seems to have been organized on an adequate scale. For this the local friends deserve all credit. Mr. Greevz Fisher presided with dignity and efficiency at both meetings. Visitors were present from Huddersfield, Sheffield, Bradford, Barnsley, Wakefield, and elsewhere; and in all probability the meetings will lead to work being commenced in some of these places. Mr. Cohen took with him to Leeds a nasty cold, but returned none the worse for his experience. The experiment involved considerable expense, and its success was evidence of what can be accomplished when the work is undertaken in the right spirit.

Mr. Cohen is having a busy week-end this week. In order to visit as many places as possible he will be leaving London early on Saturday morning for Maesteg. There will be a meeting of Freethinkers in the late afternoon whom he has been asked to address, with a public meeting in the evening in the large Town Hall. On Sunday he will lecture twice at Ferndale, and on Monday at Llwynypia—thus opening up ground in two new places. This will mean either travelling overnight or leaving very early on Tuesday morning in order to get the next week's *Freethinker* out. And by Tuesday evening he will have earned a night's rest, if nothing else.

We are now in the midst of the Election turmoil, and there is a good opportunity for Freethinkers bringing their views before the public. Candidates should be questioned on at least four points:—

1. Their attitude with regard to the abolition of religious instruction in all State-supported schools.
2. The abolition of the Blasphemy Laws (such as the 9 and 10 William III., c. 35).
3. The complete disestablishment of religion, as in France.
4. The abolition of compulsory Church Parades and of compulsory attendance at "Divine Service" in both Army and Navy.

For over four years politicians have all been calling the universe to witness our devotion to freedom, and what we were prepared to undergo to secure liberty. We have now a chance of proving that our talk is not mere lip-service. None of these four points claim any sectarian or party advantages. They each involve a plain and simple act of justice towards all citizens. They leave all opinions on religion absolutely equal before the law. They affirm the duty of leaving the child with an unbiased mind, and the adult, whether in or out of the Army and Navy, free to choose the religion that seems to him best, or to reject them all.

Sir James Frazer has added to the debt all Freethinkers owe him by the publication of a new work on *Folk-lore in the Old Testament, Studies in Comparative Religion, Legend, and Law*. Like the author's *Golden Bough*, the work is a mine from which all students may dig, and while themselves enriched, leaves wealth for all. We intend, at an early date, dealing with the book at some length, and merely call attention here to the publication of a work that a great many of our readers will be anxious to possess. The work treats of the Creation, The Flood, The Tower of Babel, The Story of Sampson, The Mark of Cain, and numerous Biblical customs and legends. In each case the reader is treated to a wide survey of corresponding customs and stories among primitive races. There are also a couple of deeply interesting chapters on Primogeniture and Unigeniture, which open up quite a number of associated subjects. The work will help still more clearly to emphasize the savage origins of Christian religions, and we hope that one day Sir James will do for the New Testament what he has here done for the Old Bible. As we have said, we intend dealing with the work at some length as early as possible. *Folk-lore in the Old Testament* is published in three volumes, uniform with the *Golden Bough*, price 37s. 6d.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures twice to-day (Dec. 1) in the Dockers' Hall, Swansea; at 3, "The Value of the Bible in National Life"; at 7, "Science, Religion, and Morals." Good audiences are certain, but we hope to hear that the hall is crowded out on both occasions. On Tuesday, Dec. 3, at 7, Mr. Lloyd lectures at Ogmores Vale, where a new Branch of the N. S. S. is being formed.

We have in the press, and hope to issue in the course of two or three weeks, a small volume of literary essays by our contributor, Mr. Andrew Millar. Readers of the *Freethinker* have for long appreciated Mr. Millar's essays as they have appeared in these columns, and many will no doubt be pleased to have them in a more permanent form. Mr. Millar's natural taste for the picturesque has won him many admirers, both in the *Freethinker* and other journals.

The *R.P.A. Annual* for 1919 is well up to its usual level of varied excellence. Mr. Eden Phillpotts opens with a poem on "The Fruit of the Tree," in which a good idea is well worked out, but ends with a rather lame line. Professor Gilbert Murray manages to say all he wishes about the War through the mouths of Aristophanes, Erasmus, and Voltaire. Professor Bury writes on the Censorship, in which he makes a rather uneasy defence of a bad institution, while the objection to a censorship is evaded rather than refuted. Mr. William Archer, Mr. McCabe, Mr. F. J. Gould, Mr. H. S.

Salt and others complete the issue. The price of the Annual is now One Shilling.

Extract from a sergeant's letter:—

The Battalion is being disbanded, and we leave this camp in a day or two. The C. of England parade this morning was somewhat interesting by reason of the fact that the chaplain, in saying farewell to us, lamented that his work had been a failure. It seems that the soldier can be compelled to attend the Church service, but he cannot be made to partake of the food provided for his spiritual and mental refreshment. The address would not have been remarkable, except for its honesty, had it not been obvious that the chaplain thought the fault lay with the soldier, not with him or the Church. Poor parsons! four years' of war have taught them nothing; but Tommy has learnt many things. If the afore-mentioned gentleman could have heard the latter's after-church remarks, he would have realized that. But few parsons have ever been sufficiently in touch with the private soldier to understand his mental make-up. Already the rank and file look forward to the day when there will be no compulsory Church Parade. Perhaps the padre's gloom was deepened by a vision of empty churches, for he looked anxious as he passed out, conscious of defeat, but sublimely, pathetically unconscious of the reason.

Mr. C. Rickard writes:—

May I offer you my congratulations on your splendid courage in keeping the flag flying during the terrible time we have just passed through, and trust you will give your readers an opportunity of showing their appreciation in a practical manner in the near future.

We hope they will all show their appreciation *at once* by helping us to give the *Freethinker* the circulation it deserves.

The following reaches us from one of our naval units:—

Enclosed you will find note, value 10s., a small contribution from four stalwarts on the above-named ship.

I regret that the contribution has been so long in being sent, but you will quite understand that the exigencies of the Service are to blame.

We all wish that we could be of more use to the *Freethinker*, but are doing our best. It may interest you to know that the circulation aboard has now reached twenty copies.

Mr. M. Westlake writes:—

I am late in sending my mite, but, though undischarged, my duty was not forgotten. I owe the *Freethinker* a debt of gratitude, and regret that the help I can now give is but small. I am only a poor man, and for your sake wish it were otherwise; but although the world will benefit but little, financially, from my death, I think it but right to inform you that the *Freethinker* has not been forgotten. In planning the disposal of my small estate, at such time when I have joined the "choir invisible," nothing gave me greater satisfaction than the knowledge that the *Freethinker* would be amongst the few who would benefit by my death.

We can only say with all sincerity that, while appreciating to the full the spirit of the above, we hope that Mr. Westlake may keep the *Freethinker* for many years from benefiting by his death.

For some unexplained reason, Mrs. Scaton-Tiedemann failed to keep her appointment with the North London Branch on Sunday last. A fine gathering had assembled to listen to this lady, and, under the chairmanship of Mr. Collette-Jones, various members debated the subject of Divorce, the discussion being interesting and enlightening. To-day, Mr. Ben Purse, of the National League of the Blind, will open. His subject, "Socialism v. the Policy and Programme of the Liberal Party," is most opportune, and Mr. Purse, we hear, is a good speaker and debater. We hope he will have a large audience.

Will *Freethinker* readers in and about Chester be good enough to communicate with Mr. D. Sutherland, 30 Francis Street, Chester, with a view to organization and propaganda?

The New York *Truthseeker* reprints Mr. Cohen's article of September 8 on "Materialism," with suitable acknowledgments.



## Religion After the War.

The Church and the War—these are the two engrossing topics of the day.....From every rank of life comes eager questioning. "Why is all this?" "How can God permit it?" "Has Christianity no better record of its two thousand years than this murderous flood of evil deeds?—this cruelty, and lust, and bloodshed?" And the Church apparently cannot explain why Christianity has failed in its teaching, or why the blasphemous outcries of a ruthless tyrant are permitted to ascend to Heaven as excuse or explanation.—"Rita" (Mrs. Desmond Humphreys) "*The Wrong End of Religion*," pp. 3-4.

This War by its surpassing magnitude and almost incredible horror has.....compelled men.....to subject the deepest problems of religion to an analysis from which most of those who are attached to specific creeds would certainly have shrunk as profane before these floodgates were unloosed.....many of them are driven against their will to the despairing conclusion that either there is no God, or that He is not good, or that He is not all-powerful. If they say, there were a God, just and omnipotent, He could not have permitted this awful waste and suffering when he might so easily have prevented it all. They only feel irritated and insulted when they are told that they must submit without question and believe in Him in the teeth of evidence which they cannot controvert.—M. H. Temple, "*The Failure of the Church*," the "*National Review*," January 1918, p. 571.

HAVE the Churches gained or lost by the War? After four years of this barbarous and savage War it is time to look round and see how the Churches have stood the test. Have they advanced or gone back in public estimation?

We think there can be but one answer to the question; the Churches have lost enormously in prestige. A storm of hostile criticism is beating against the Churches. Books, like *The Wrong End of Religion*, by "Rita," *The Questions of Ignotus*, *The War and the Churches*, by Joseph McCabe, and the same writer's *Bankruptcy of Religion*, and many others, fiercely attacking the Churches, have been bought and read by thousands.

There has also been a deluge of criticism, advice, and exhortation in the magazines and the daily and weekly press. Never have the Churches been so faithfully dealt with, so openly and publicly criticized, denounced, and derided, as to-day. And as the daily and weekly press are very careful not to publish anything but what the public want, it may be taken that they represent the great majority of public opinion in the matter.

And the criticism often comes from the most unexpected quarters. For instance, Mr. Harold Begbie, the author of several religious novels, whose occasional articles in the *Daily Chronicle* so reek with pious sentiment—there is nothing to be compared with them outside the columns of the *War Cry*—one would think that he would be one of the first to rally to the defence of the Church; or, at any rate, of religion, from the attacks launched against them. On the contrary, we find him denouncing them in good set terms. In an article, entitled "The Rout of Religion," contributed to the *Royal Magazine* for August, 1915, after declaring that the War was caused by commercial rivalry. He observes:—

Religion could not prevent the war because it had not previously prevented commercial competition; it cannot stop the war because it has never attempted to stop trade wars, or sweating, or price-cutting, or trusts, or commercial selfishness. Religion has been a looker-on. It has played no active part in existence. It has occupied the seat of a spectator, or has been the considerate physician to those whom the battles of trade fling broken and almost dead out of the firing-line. Religion has never stood up to industrialism, and called it a devil. The tables of the money-changers are fastened to the ground; those who sell doves fear violence only from the Suffragettes; from the Church they expect protection.

He advises us to go through the streets of any of our centres of industry and study the faces there, "and ask yourself whether the wounds inflicted by rifle, and steel, are not cleaner wounds than the maimings of commerce .....look at the packed public-houses, the atrocious architecture, the dreadful clothes, the vulgarizing theatres, the hypocritical journalism, and the nauseous literature of these great centres of commerce. Who would live there, except to make money? Why has religion looked on and kept silence? Life's object is not the making of money." He continues:—

Is it so amazing, then, that we find in this war a man like Bishop Gore upholding British arms, a man like Eucken upholding German arms, a man like the Cardinal Archbishop of Paris upholding French arms, and the priests of Bavaria to a man upholding German arms? Catholics are slaughtering Catholics; Protestants are slaughtering Protestants. The French soldier and the German soldier expire kissing the same cross and breathing the same prayer. On both sides men are singing hymns, reading the Bible, praying through Christ to the One True God.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Begbie says, and we agree with him, "that men will take a more intelligent interest in religion," that they will decline to be fobbed off with the answer "that such and such is the tradition of the Church." They will say to themselves: "'Religion did not avert this horrible war; religion was powerless even to mitigate the waste and destruction of this hideous catastrophe; religion has really done nothing at all for the brotherhood of humanity.' They will reflect that religion has had a long innings, that religion has enjoyed enormous wealth and influence, that religion has had the means and the inspiration to make a brotherhood of the human race. Is it not certain that they will reject the existing organization of religion which has so disastrously failed humanity?"<sup>2</sup> Mr. Begbie records: "I heard a well-known man say at a luncheon party the other day that what most impressed him in this War was the collapse of ecclesiasticism. He spoke of the Church's ignominious silence in this world crisis. No one contradicted him." Mr. Begbie says: "The present generation of Christians will pass away sorrowful and dejected." But expresses the pious hope that in the new generation to come the Church will be born again. If it is, there is not much doubt that it will be still-born. For, look you, it is the fundamental dogmas of religion itself that are being questioned to-day, more widely and more drastically than ever before. God himself is being tried in the balance and found wanting. People are saying, "What is the use of praying to God for help if he was unable, or unwilling, to avert this frightful catastrophe that has engulfed the world?"

So far from the Church providing any intelligible answer to this agonizing demand for a satisfactory explanation of God's indifference or ill-will, says Mr. H. Temple, "Such authority as exists in the Church of England has occupied itself with the beatification of that very doubtful character Charles the First, and with the expurgation from the Psalter of certain verses which never seemed more appropriate than at the present time. But of anything like an organized effort to come to the help of the people whose faith is being shaken to its foundations by this grim but most undeniably real figure of war, there is hardly a trace."<sup>3</sup>

Another writer, who attacks the Church as the opponent of true religion, observes:—

The pagan Greeks of old were honest enough to close their temples of peace when the nation went to war,

<sup>1</sup> Harold Begbie, "The Rout of Religion," *The Royal Magazine*, p. 350.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 351.

<sup>3</sup> M. H. Temple, "The Failure of the Church," the *National Review*, January, 1918; p. 572.

and kept them closed until peace was restored. Not so the modern representatives of what is euphemistically called Christianity. Far from having any religious objections to warfare from the Christian standpoint, the preaching fraternity, as usual, showed a united front in favour of the international slaughter.....the parsons and priests of the various brands of Christianity represented in the several belligerent countries at once plumped for bloodshed, declared God to be on their side, and began at once to pray to the Prince of Peace for victory. What can the God of orthodox Christianity be expected to do in such an extremity? Obviously, He cannot answer the prayers of all the Allies and those of their enemies at the same time. The gravity of His situation would be intense if the humour of it were not so apparent.<sup>1</sup>

And having beaten the patriotic drum from the pulpit, the Church straightway obtained exemption from military service for its clergy—a class of men who produce nothing; are, in fact, parasites on the nation, who could be more easily spared than any class in the community, and yet declined to serve their country in the hour of its most desperate need.

As Mr. M. H. Temple observes:—

The original refusal by the Anglican Bishops to allow the younger clergy to join the ranks when the first call came for men was a mistake which inevitably emphasized the divorce between the clergy and the people.....If, as Article 37 asserts, "it is lawful for Christian men, at the commandment of the Magistrate, to wear weapons and serve in the wars," why were the younger clergy forbidden to serve in a war so just as this, and at a time when the need for men was so imperative?

In my opinion, as a mere matter of policy, the Church made a fatal mistake here, and lost the last shred of respect the ordinary man still retained for her.

(To be continued.) W. MANN.

## Modern Methods of Salving the "Soul."

(Continued from p. 605.)

ANOTHER glaring instance of question-begging is given in the phrase "psychical energy." If the phrase were used simply as a metaphor to denote the mental state of restless striving and action which accompanies pent-up neural energy of vigorous youth and health, no exception whatever could be taken to it. All mental states or processes are expressed in terms of physical similes, however effaced by now may be their birth-marks—so artificial a "creation" is man's world of ideas or thought.

Dr. McDougall, however, does not use it as a term of descriptive analogy, but as expressive of something which has a fundamental affinity or kinship with physical energy, for they are assumed or declared to be mutually transmutable.

We have, therefore, a right to ask, What is this "psychical energy"—what are its attributes? What property has it which identifies it with energy and entitles it to be denoted by it, and in what way does it differ from it?

There is no ambiguity as to the meaning of physical energy. It is "that which can do work"—that is, overcome physical resistance either of "force" or of inertia. In other words, it is that which can effect spatial displacement or movement.

Now, can "psychical energy" produce movement or strain in physical substance? If it can, why call it "psychical"? If it cannot, why call it "energy"?

To discuss its transmutability is therefore as disingenuous as the thing itself is gratuitous and baseless.

<sup>1</sup> W. Bell, *The Exodus from Houndsditch*; 1916; pp. 11, 12.

Another potent "argument" is to cast doubt upon established generalizations of science, which directly negative his pet "soul" theory.

He speaks most disparagingly of the premier and best established principle of science—"The Conservation of Energy." He refers to it as "merely a generalized statement of an empirically established fact."

That which rests on the solid *bed-rock* of uniform human experience, to which there is not a single recorded exception, is scoffed at as "empirical," while the guesses of the perfervid imaginations of ignorant and blind fanatics, which have not the empirical basis of even *one* demonstrable fact, are held up to honour.

He sneers at the phrase "potential energy" as a "convenient fiction."

It is difficult to refer to this jibe without apparent discourtesy. One is at a loss to know whether to regard it as a "cheap sneer" over the crude efforts of science at naming things in the days of its youth, or to his having no clear conception of the meaning of "energy."

The term "potential" as applied to energy is obviously crude and misleading. The energy usually referred to by the term is in no sense "potential." It is as actual as the kinetic form. When the term was first used by infant science, energy was conceived as that which is possessed by *mass in motion*. And the word "potential" had reference to the word "kinetic" rather than to the word "energy." It is an instance of an unfortunate act of wrong-naming a thing, as was often the case with infant science. Energy has two distinct forms: the kinetic and the static; one is due to mass-motion or momentum, the other to position or strain. A spatial element is equally essential to either kind—as displacement in the one and as movement in the other; both of which are familiarly exemplified in the swing of a pendulum, during which they alternate at every instant, as it paces and re-paces its arc. But the one form is just as much energy as the other—a fact which makes Dr. McDougall's disdainful comment sorry reading.

In the same question-begging strain Dr. McDougall devotes some space to "proving" that the "inconceivability" of the notion of transmutation of "psychical energy" into the physical and *vice versa* does not imply the impossibility of the process. I agree; but it is a question-begging discussion and settles nothing. Such a plea helps the Materialistic view more than it does his own. In the case of the "Materialist" the inconceivability of the "movements and gyrations of atoms becoming states of consciousness" is usually urged as the fatal gap in his theory. If, therefore, "inconceivability" is no barrier to itself, the main objection to "Materialism" is gone. The Materialist has no gratuitous figment on the other side of the gap with which he must try and correlate it.

Dr. McDougall's first task is to produce evidence of the existence of his postulate—the soul of its energy. It is then, and only then, will it be relevant to discuss the "conceivability" of transmutations between plupical and psychic.

(To be concluded.) KERIDON.

## Correspondence.

FREETHINKERS AND THE GENERAL ELECTION.  
QUESTIONS FOR CANDIDATES.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—For some mysterious reason the Prime Minister has decided not to wait till the general treaty of Peace is signed, but to launch forth on a General Election for a new Parliament before Christmas. Naturally and rightly we are all highly enthusiastic in having shattered the power of the Militarist caste in the West, which, supported by all the forces of a reactionary superstition, has, for over forty years, held

the nations in thrall. But in placing within the reach of all that priceless liberty and freedom for which our brethren have so gloriously fought, suffered, and died, let us not be unmindful of the fact that complete liberty and equality in matters of religion has still to be won at home.

It must be clear to all that the new Parliament will be faced with tremendous issues. The Churches are already on the war-path, and it behoves all who believe in the supremacy of reason and man's unconquerable mind to be on the alert lest the best of causes suffer a setback. Therefore, I would urgently impress upon all Freethinkers, Positivists, Rationalists, and Progressive thinkers the vital necessity of forcing from all candidates an unequivocal declaration of their attitude to the following questions:—

Whether the candidate is in favour of and will actively support measures for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church of England, and the abolition of all tithes, and resolutely oppose every effort to endow any religious sects at the public expense.

Whether he will support the complete elimination of clerical control in every form in the education of children, and a policy which will give the child of the poorest member of the community an equal opportunity in every respect with the child of the rich man to rise to the highest rung of the educational ladder.

Whether he will support the 'complete' repeal of the Blasphemy Laws, and will urge the removal of all restrictions interfering with complete freedom of speech and writing.

If all your readers will make a point of insisting upon straightforward answers to the above questions they will be doing a great service in enlightening public opinion and forwarding the progress of the cause we all have at heart.

FREDERIC W. WALSH.

#### LIFE AFTER DEATH.

SIR,—In an article in the *Daily Chronicle* of the 5th inst., Sir A. Conan Doyle asserts that Physical Phenomena of Spiritualism have been proved beyond a shadow of possible doubt. These phenomena consist mostly of certain movements of material things, table-turning and the like, without any apparent material power to cause them. Granted that such phenomena occur, it by no means follows that because the material power is not apparent therefore it is not there. Any professional conjurer can do things quite as mysterious without any appeal to spiritual forces, and the late Mr. Maskelyne once offered to bet £1,000 that he would reproduce any of the Spiritualist physical phenomena by material means—a bet which was never accepted by the Psychical Research Society.

Apart from such phenomena, however, it remains for Spiritualists to furnish some reasonable explanation as to why the communications received from the spirits of the departed are invariably of the most silly character, and utterly useless in clearing up questions of great interest and importance. Many innocent persons have been accused of murder, and, indeed, actually hanged, when a communication from the spirit of the murdered person might have prevented such a gross miscarriage of the law. Again, the mystery of Edwin Drood has been a puzzle to the literary world for many years, yet a communication from the late Charles Dickens could easily solve it. Ships, with their whole crews, have been lost mysteriously at sea, yet no word of explanation has come from the spirit world—why?

G. O. WARREN, Major (retired).

#### National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON NOVEMBER 21.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, occupied the chair. Also present: Messrs. Brandes, Eagar, Kelf, Leat, Palmer, Quinton, Roger, Samuels, Thurlow, and Wood; Miss Kough, Miss Pitcher, Mrs. Rolf, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the last meeting were read and confirmed.

New members were received for Coventry, Glasgow, West Ham, and the Parent Society—eleven in all.

A letter was received from Miss Alma Stanley tendering her resignation as Vice-President and member of the Executive. It was resolved that the resignation be accepted

with regret, and a letter written to Miss Stanley expressing the Executive's appreciation of her past loyal services.

The President reported the result of the Special Conference held at Birmingham was that the scheme of re-organization presented by the Special Committee had been carried with a few alterations.

A request from the Conference that certain minutes of October 31 be expunged was not complied with.

It was proposed that a Committee to consider the division of groups and areas as provided for in the new Constitution be elected, but after discussion it was decided that this and other matters remitted to the Executive by the Conference should stand adjourned.—E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

#### 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.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, W., near Edgware Road): 8, Mr. Dales, "Materialism."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Mr. Ben Purse (National League of the Blind), "Socialism v. The Policy and Programme of the Liberal Party." Open Debate.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7.30, Mr. F. Shaller, "Freewill."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, Mordaunt Shairp, B.A., "Verhaeren: Two Plays—'The Cloister,' 'The Dawn.'"

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BARNSELY BRANCH N. S. S. (Irving's Studio, 48 Sheffield Road): Tuesday, December 3, 7.30, "Soldiers and Secularism."

FERNDALE (Workmen's Hall): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 2.30, "The Challenge of Unbelief"; 7, "Do the Dead Live?"

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Dr. F. H. Haywood, "Secular Education, or Something Better." (Those interested in the education of the child are invited to come and hear Dr. Hayward's solution of the Religious Difficulty.)

LLWYNYPIA. December 2, 6.30, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Do the Dead Live?"

MAESTEG BRANCH N. S. S., November 30, South Wales Committee will be held at the Plasmewdd Restaurant (near G. W. Railway Station) at 5.30. Mr. Chapman Cohen, will be present. 6.30, Maesteg Town Hall, C. Cohen, "The Challenge of Unbelief."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Hall, 56 Swan Street): 6.30, Delegate's Report of Birmingham Conference. Members attendance earnestly requested.

SHEFFIELD ETHICAL SOCIETY (Builders' Exchange, Cross Burgess Street): 6.30, Mr. F. H. Whitehouse, "The Survival of the Fittest v. Self-Sacrifice."

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N. S. S. (Victoria Hall Buildings, First Floor, Fowler Street): Mr. R. Chapman, 6.30, Conference Report; 7, "Mary Wollstonecraft."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Dockers' Hall, Swansea): Mr. J. T. Lloyd, 3, "The Value of the Bible in National Life"; 7, "Science, Religion, and Morals."

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