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Views and Opinions.

Stocktaking.

The New Year is a time for stocktaking; but on this occasion the period covered must be more than the customary twelve months. It must, to be at all effective, cover four years. January, 1915, found the world in the grip of one of the largest and one of the most brutal wars in history. January, 1919, finds that War a thing of the past, although if some of our leaders have their way, the Peace will contain the seeds of future wars, as previous pacts contained the germs of the conflict just concluded. The total of over twenty millions killed and wounded is easily written; luckily for human sanity, the mind fails to grasp the full significance of the figures, expressed as they might be in terms of human suffering and social demoralization. In other directions a debit and credit account might be made out, although he would be a marvellous accountant who could prepare a generally acceptable balance-sheet. These four years have seen accepted ideas and established institutions challenged, and many have stood but ill the ordeal. Glimpses of a better social order have been caught through the red haze of war; but, on the other hand, credulity, hatred, and falsehood have run riot to an extent appalling to such as had taken the shibboleths of moralists and theologians at their face value. That the savage was not buried very deeply with "civilized" people many of us were aware. That it was so near the surface is a revelation and a menace.

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How Stands Christianity?

We do not think that many candid Christians will deny that, when the balance-sheet is made out, Christianity and the Churches will be seen to have lost heavily. So much is, indeed, generally admitted. This is not because war and Christianity are hostile terms; history soon corrects any illusion on that point. It is because the War has acted as a solvent upon many established religious ideas and prepossessions. So long as wars were confined to small affairs in Africa or Asia, or with the less civilized and more defenceless peoples of the earth, the predatory nature of "Imperial Expansion" was hidden, and the blessings of Christian civilization were allowed to pass unchallenged by all save a small minority. The War has, for many thousands, put an

end to that. Christianity which could not protect the heathen from the Christian, has now demonstrably failed to protect Christians from each other. The fate of the native races all over the world has shown that in practice the Christian doctrine of brotherhood has never meant more than the brotherhood of a gang. Within the gang, rules had to be observed; outside the gang they might be broken with impunity. To take from each other was robbery; to steal from the native races of Asia or Africa was part of a "providential" design. It was the morality of a thieves' kitchen expressed in terms of pious aspiration. And now even that has broken down. Christianity has shown itself as incapable of keeping the peace between Christians as it was to protect non-Christians from exploitation. Humanity is now left face to face with the necessity of finding some other way than that hitherto adopted of guaranteeing the world's peace. And one may be quite certain that scant attention will be paid to the claim that Christianity is adequate to the task.

* * *

The Collapse of the Churches.

The Churches have lost heavily by the exposure of the falsity of a theory. They have lost even more heavily by the last four years of practice. If nations somewhat equal in strength and resources are to go to war, hatred must be preached, credulity cultivated, the enemy painted in the most sombre colours, and each side convinced of its own integrity and devotion to justice. All this is no more than the psychology of warfare; and those who remembered the record of the Churches in the South African, the Burmese, the Matabele, the Crimean, and the Chinese wars, knew what to expect. But thousands of professed believers were shocked at the energy with which the Churches threw themselves into the task of fanning the war fever. It was not that those who shrank from the clergy playing the part they did doubted the justice of the cause of the Allies; it was simply that they felt the task of preaching war and cultivating national hatred did not belong to the pulpit. They felt that in a world at war there was still need for some regulative moral force—some power that would tend to keep the passions of men under control, and serve to humanize what is at best a dehumanizing business. They saw the Churches pandering to passion instead of controlling it; and when they saw the clergy, after playing the part of zealous recruiting agents, securing exemption from military service, declining to join the Army as ordinary soldiers, but joining as chaplains with an officer's pay and an officer's privileges, surprise gave way to contempt. The Churches showed themselves without the power of judgment or leadership. They had proclaimed themselves the guardians of universal love and brotherhood; they proved themselves incapable of seeing the permanence of these ideals through the dust of conflict. Like the Papal Legate in the Waldensian massacres, their message was "Kill, kill, God will know his own." They played to passions for four years; they will have to abide

by the cooler judgment of men now the conflict is over.

* * *

The League of Nations.

If the Christians of the world were resolved upon a permanent peace it would be an accomplished fact. And there is only one road along which this can be obtained. This is by total disarmament and the realization of Thomas Paine's dream of a League of Nations. And the Allies with America have the power to secure this if they will. They can impose what terms they will upon the Central Powers, and no sensible person would blame them if they seized the present opportunity for putting it beyond the power of Germany *and themselves* to wage war in the future. But it is idle to dream of a Peace of Nations while this or that nation maintains an Army or a Navy strong enough to wage war either on its own account or in combination with others. That is a return to the old system of alliances defensive and offensive. A real League of Nations means giving as well as taking. It means surrendering the power to attack in return for security from aggression. A man's value to the world consists not in what he takes from it but in what he gives to it. There is a chance for the world to make this War the last of wars; but if that is to be done, it will have to cleanse its mouth of the cant of religion, and its mind of the fog of superstition.

* * *

Our Prospects.

A shattered authority, a lowered moral prestige, a diminished following, and a future prescient with disaster. That is the present position of the Churches. On the other hand, the outlook for Freethought was never so promising. The shortcomings of religion, both in theory and in practice, were never so forcibly brought home to people as during the past four years. The uselessness of the religious hypothesis, and the obstructive character of religious organizations is becoming generally apparent. Nowhere is this more evident than in the rapidly-developing Labour Movement. Thousands of the rank and file are at length realizing that it is useless coquetting with religion in the hope of "capturing the Churches." The Churches are too old and too astute to be captured; their game is to capture. There was always plenty of Freethought in the Labour Movement, to-day it is becoming more determined on asserting its existence, and in making its power felt. And, in truth, this is symptomatic of the country at large. In all my nearly thirty years' experience as a speaker and writer on Freethought I have never known our movement so much alive, more determined in its efforts, and more optimistic in its spirit. And I think I may claim to know the conditions of the Freethought party more intimately than anyone. For over a century Freethought has been a great seminal force in English life, even though little recognized as such. To-day it is being more generally recognized for what it is. It is seen to be one of those clarifying forces without which forms of government avail but little, and the best of institutions become wrested to selfish ends. Four years of War has helped to demonstrate the impotency of religion. Our task in the immediate future should be to demonstrate the potency of Freethought.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Your very citadel is but a mud fort, fenced about with a few rotten bamboos; it is taken, and in its very midst we have planted the flag of truth, and it flies there and has not been touched.—*Charles Bradlaugh.*

Certainly it is pleasant to dream of eternity. But for an honest man it is enough to have lived his life, doing his work.—*Emile Zola.*

Reconstruction.

IN all departments of human life the need for reconstruction is self-evident. In the background of the public mind this need has always been more or less consciously felt; but the Great War has been the means of bringing it round to the forefront as an immediately pressing topic. It is now being generally written and talked about, its grim urgency being universally recognized. Naturally, behind this keen recognition lies the conviction that most of the structures of the past have proved gigantic failures. This was the characteristic note on all platforms during the General Election. Whilst the greatest diversity of views was freely expressed on the nature of the process and the best methods of conducting it, there was the utmost unanimity as to its necessity. The political world, we were assured, requires remodelling; and each party claimed that it alone was competent to undertake the momentous task. Capital and Labour, the division of society into different and often hostile classes, the frightful prevalence of slum conditions in all the great centres of population, poverty verging on semi-starvation; these are, at bottom, economic questions which peremptorily demand immediate and thorough solution. With these and other cognate problems the present article will not attempt to deal, not because the writer is not sensible of their vast importance, but because they lie outside the sphere in which he is primarily interested, and also because he is convinced that the intellectual emancipation of the race, or its deliverance from bondage under the curse of superstition, and that the realization of this end would simplify and facilitate the reconstruction of the political, social, and economic fabric. Has not supernaturalism always been the supreme obstacle to all terrestrial reforms? If this could be rolled away, would it not be all the easier to concentrate attention and energy upon matters relating exclusively to our life on earth? Hitherto the pulpit has concerned itself almost wholly with another life in another world, and has aimed at persuading men and women to set their mind upon heavenly things, and not upon the things of time and sense; or, in other words, to make it their first and only real business to prepare for eternity, their true home. The attitude of the Christian religion to this world and its life has invariably been one of disparagement and often even of contempt. The profoundly religious person has his citizenship in heaven, not on earth. The saints whom the Church considers it her duty and privilege to honour and venerate are described as heaven's favourites, who lived above and but slightly influenced by the world and its affairs. Flaubert makes St. Antony declare:—

Man, being a spirit, should withdraw himself from perishable things. Action degrades him. I would not like to cling to the earth—even with the soles of my feet.

It appears, however, that the Church, in her anxiety concerning her fate in the future, realizes the necessity of undertaking the reconstruction of theology. Prior to the War, Germany's motto, according to Bernhardt, was, "World-Power or Downfall." It has been brought home to the Church, by the War, that unless she introduces radical reforms, nothing awaits her but destruction. She forgets that the queen of the sciences, as she calls theology, has been subjected to a more or less drastic reconstruction in every age. Indeed, the transformation of Christianity has been on such an immense scale that if the Gospel Jesus were to revisit the glimpses of the moon he would not be able to recognize it as the offspring of his genius. But, in reality, no modification of supernaturalism, however thorough,

will ever render it acceptable to rationalized minds. What it requires is not reconstruction but annihilation. A few years ago the Bishop of Oxford delivered a series of lectures on the reconstruction of theology; but the reconstruction recommended by him was more nominal than real; and what he retained was fully as objectionable as what he rejected. To him Christianity is a message, concerning which he says: "My duty is to make it plain that the message claims to be based, not on human reason, but on a Divine revelation given us finally in Jesus Christ." Foremost in the message is the Fatherhood of God, which, his lordship admits, "is so hard to reconcile with the facts of suffering and injustice and cruelty, and with the seeming moral indifference of Nature." Then comes the doctrine of the deity and atonement of Jesus Christ, through faith in whose name alone salvation from sin is possible. These items in the message, though variously and contradictorily explained, are looked upon by all divines as essential and indispensable. Christianity includes multitudes of other doctrines naturally growing out of and dependent upon these, which, being less vital, may, in an emergency, be allowed to drop out; but these must be retained in some form or other or Christianity will cease to be. They represent the irreducible minimum. They may be capable of considerable modification as to outward expression, but in essence they must remain. To reconstruct theology, therefore, is by no means to increase its acceptableness or credibility, though it may result in the disappearance of some of the most conspicuously absurd tenets. So long as the belief in God and the spiritual world continues, other worldliness, or heavenly mindedness, will be pronounced a noble virtue, the cultivation of which constitutes man's chief duty, with the inevitable result that secular interests, being of only secondary importance, will be more or less neglected, or attended to from a wrong motive.

Now, the paramount mission of Freethought, in our judgment, is to do its utmost to discredit and break the power of superstition, to pull down the whole structure of supernaturalism, having previously undermined its foundation of unverifiable assumptions. The Bishop of Oxford tells us bluntly that other-worldliness is a fundamental attribute of the Christian character. Of Christians he says:—

God is to be first in their lives—in unquestioned and undisputed supremacy; but they are to test the reality of their love of God only by their conduct towards their fellow-men. Their manner of life is to be heavenly; it is to draw all its motives and power from that heavenly place where Christ is seated at the right hand of God, it is to measure everything by the issues of eternal life and eternal death (*The Religion of the Church*, pp. 101-2).

We teach, on the contrary, that morality is at once a necessity and product of gregarious life, that all its motives and sanctions are derived from the attachment or affection of individuals for the herd, tribe, nation, or race to which they belong, and that this attachment or affection is itself the fruit of social life, and cannot but be weakened and impoverished by the simultaneous existence of a supreme affection for God and his things. Does it not logically follow that Christianity, with its supernatural motives and sanctions, if seriously brought to bear upon the reconstruction of society, which all agree must be set on foot forthwith, would have a deleterious effect on the whole process? According to the *Church Times* for December 13, "the temper of the nation is not good," and "there is an ugly spirit abroad"; but the conditions largely responsible for this national bad temper, and this ugly spirit, have arisen as the well-nigh direct and unavoidable outcome of the selfish individualism engendered and nourished by

the Christian religion. The *Church Times*, in an able leading article, entitled "The Spirit of Reconstruction," admits further that "the tendency to quarrelsomeness and recrimination is not absent in the Church and among the clergy." Generally speaking, history bears witness to the fact that Christianity has caused more divisions, discords, antagonisms, usually eventuating in bloody persecution, than all other forces put together. As Freethinkers, therefore, our principal share in the work of reconstruction will be, as it always has been, of a preparatory nature. Charles Bradlaugh was proud to be known as Iconoclast, because he made war upon what he regarded as obsolete opinions, beliefs, and institutions; but what he aimed at was not destruction for its own sake, but only as the essential condition of urgently needed construction. The City of God, which has never been much more than a fondly cherished dream of theologians and ecclesiastics, except in so far as it has materialized in the Christian Church, must be pulled down even in idea, and all the ruins cleared out, that the City of Man may be firmly founded and solidly built up. In other words, our work is more negative than positive, the slaying of the lions in the way, the smashing of the idols that distract the heart; but we must not forget that in *intention* all this work is grandly positive. Reconstruction presupposes the destruction by some means of a former edifice which, owing to its nature and condition, hindered progress. From our point of view, Christianity is that antiquated, dilapidated, useless edifice, the disappearance of which must precede the erection of a social fabric that will meet all the requirements of the coming days; and our inspiration for further effort is derived from the knowledge that the work is prospering more and more; that Christianity is, not merely at the cross roads, as Mr. Shakespeare maintains, but in the melting-pot, out of which it will never issue in a recognizable form. The brotherhood of believers, which never bore the fruit of social welfare, is gradually giving place to the brotherhood of Man, which will, if given fairplay and ample scope, infallibly initiate the reign of universal goodwill and altruistic ministries.

J. T. LLOYD.

A Popular Educator.

There is
One great society alone on earth;
The noble Living and the noble Dead.

—Wordsworth.

It would be difficult to name a contemporary "intellectual" who is more a man of his time than Mr. F. J. Gould. It is from that point of view, as the man of free, unfettered intellect, many-sided, with keen, living personal interest in the multiform problems of his day, that we prefer to write about him. His attitude towards education, towards Freethought, towards Socialism, towards sex problems, can only be referred to. It would take the entire number of this paper to treat them with becoming respect. Besides, they are to be found in his many books, the perfect lucidity and beautiful English of which many a successful man-of-letters might despair to emulate. We shall discuss him, not as a mere writer of books, but as a cultured man and citizen, whose teaching and writing have had for their great object the promotion of popular culture in the very widest sense of that much-abused word, though, of course, upon a Rationalistic basis and method.

First of all, it is to be observed that Mr. Gould has worked hard for freedom of thought for nearly forty years. At one time a schoolmaster, he has unequalled knowledge of the drawbacks of the present system of

education. He has often lamented the non-cultivation of ethics in schools; but he may console himself with the reflection that he has done something to put the children of the present generation in the way of opportunities which their predecessors missed. Most eloquently has Mr. Gould spoken and written on the supreme importance of moral teaching. Without a lively sense of the beauty of morality a man, however intellectual, is according to Mr. Gould, only half a man. He would remedy this defect by teaching ethics in schools as a part of the ordinary curriculum. If the people of this country cared for education, Mr. Gould's *Children's Book of Moral Lessons*, *Stories for Moral Instruction*, *Children's Plutarch*, *Worth While People*, and *Brave Citizens*, would be in every school. They are not, simply because Mr. Gould disdains the sweet uses of advertisement. The author would call himself, modestly, a humble disciple of Darwin, Huxley, and Comte. But the educated public of readers here, in America, in India, and in many other countries, have come to regard him as likewise a pioneer, and theirs is a verdict without appeal.

Mr. Gould's excursions into the arid region of theology are admirably representative of his genius. His works, *Old Testament Legends*, *New Testament Legends*, *The New Testament*, to mention no others, are achievements to be proud of. He urges his Freethought with such sweet reasonableness, such gentle compassion, and in a style so imbued with grace and beauty and the joyous altruism of a steadfast faith as to be irresistible. Truly, a man who can season his views with joy is one who can command respect even from his opponents. A noteworthy trait of Mr. Gould's is a love of simple things, springing from a great heart ever open to the cries of poor, broken humanity. His books are persuasive appeals for the recognition of the Freethought ideal, emphasizing the prime necessity of a freer, fuller, and broader life for all.

Indeed, no aspect of life escapes Mr. Gould. His keen eyes noticed that Freethinkers have been at a loss to express themselves with appropriate dignity at times of bereavement. Accordingly, he has written *Funeral Services Without Theology*, a book which is so adequate that it has already become a classic. It is given to few men to write a classic; for it is one of the rare prizes of the literary life. No one will grudge Mr. Gould this honour.

A familiar figure upon the lecture platform, Mr. Gould is never irritated by opposition. This is worth recording as a proof of the wonderful sweetness of his nature. Nothing is more foreign to his temperament than any assumption of the oracular. In public as in private, in advanced life as in earlier years, he has always possessed a quiet, unassuming mode of address, and a winning charm of manner. He brings, too, a large sense of freedom into discussion. "I sail from headland to headland," said John Bright, "while Gladstone navigates every creek and inlet." So it is with Mr. Gould. His canvas responds to the great winds. He does not tack and trim, but keeps to the great highways and the open seas. It is this breadth of appeal that draws men and women, for he talks quite simply and naturally, and uses few gestures.

When we speak of Mr. Gould as a popular educator, let us clearly understand what we mean. His rich and varied experience of life lends no support to the notions of some enthusiastic persons that the world can be perfected in a day. His methods are far otherwise, and are the opposite to those of most apostles. Some improvers of society are like people who would create a garden by filling it with cut flowers. The flowers will wither and die in a day or two. Your true evolutionist, like Mr. Gould, prefers to sow the seed, and trust to the air, the rain, and sunshine.

Mr. Gould has already done enough to make us grateful for his remarkable gifts. It is surely a fine achievement to have been able to humanize deep and abiding truths, and make them spontaneous and acceptable.

MIMNERMUS.

Religion and Life.

BY DR. E. LYTTELTON.

SIR,—Before tackling the great subject, which I promised to deal with next, I must note with interest what you say on Sir J. Frazer's monumental labours. It is undeniable that he has traced a large leaven of folk-lore and primitive superstition in our ancient religious records. But it is not at all the case that this fact was unknown to students of the Bible before he wrote. What is called the Higher Criticism of the Bible was in its early stages in England conducted by clerics—notably, Driver, Gore, Ryle, and G. A. Smith. Prof. Mozley, of Oxford, wrote a luminous essay on the very characteristic which Frazer illustrates with unrivalled power of research, viz., that in the Old Testament, there are plain marks of a development in the Hebrew interpretation of life, from primitive barbarism to a tone of society which could produce an Isaiah. But that the singular feature in the history is that a people who were akin to the decadent bestial Canaanites should have risen to wonderful heights and not sunk into animalism, like the Phœnicians or the Hivites. The more the Canaanitish affinities in the Hebrews are insisted on, the greater the wonder of the eighth century prophets.

But Sir J. Frazer would, I feel sure, acknowledge a great debt to a man of noble character and historical insight—Robertson Smith, of Scotland. He was a pioneer in the same researches as those which Frazer has made famous, and did a great deal to clarify the vision of his countrymen, and of us Englishmen on the nature of the Bible record. But it is interesting to note the difference between the inferences drawn by the two great scholars. Frazer, from the first, writes as if the *original* kinship of Jewish or Christian customs with those of savage peoples, deprives the former of any title to respect. Smith, on the other hand, while dragging to light numerous anticipations dating from the remote past of Christian institutions, such as the Eucharist, never took the view that these latter were, therefore, mere relics of superstition. He remained a robust Christian to the end of his life. Indeed, there is nothing whatever in such discoveries to invalidate Theistic beliefs. It is more likely that God guides mankind through normal processes of development than *per saltum*, though there has at all times been a strain of superstitious opinion in favour of the latter. It should also be recognized that the Christian Church has never fixed officially the tenet in favour of verbal inspiration, though, of course, it was for a time widely held.

Now, what about this War; this welter of bloodshed; this ghastly pulverizing of civilization; this heart-rending misery of millions of innocent women and children? What is a thoughtful man who has human sympathies within him to make of this? He has heard parsons prate about an all-powerful, all-loving God who governs the world and wills that his creatures should be happy. "Happy indeed! Millions of the best of them—the very best—are dragging their mangled limbs about; millions of others mourning irreparable losses; havoc, bitterness, devastation, and hopeless anguish in every direction. Every prospect, every retrospect, seems to speak of an ungoverned world. Then those who talk loudest of a God who rules in righteousness, are they better than

those who deny Him? Are they better citizens; better soldiers; better fathers of families? For all that we can see there is no gain whatever in believing in a God whom all the facts of life when squarely faced disprove."

So we hear men talking. But the wonder is there are some who do not. We have to explain why hundreds of men who have been in the thick of this beastly carnage and rampant barbarism have come back to England far more fully persuaded that the world is governed by God than they were before. How is this? It is easy to give reasons for men being Atheists. What about those who are stoutly the opposite?

Well, then, they have seen that a Christian has an explanation of all this confusion and horror which an Atheist has not. The Atheist is only able to say again and again that the Christian and the Theist are all fools wandering in darkness and calling it light. But the Christian not only declares that he has got the clue to the puzzle, but that he is ready to die for his creed. Has anyone ever heard of a martyr-Atheist?

Then they have patiently thought on the question whether the dismal facts of life disprove the love and power of the Creator. Someone may have suggested two considerations which make the whole difference.

1. We agree, I suppose, that if a God created the world and man to live in it, He left man free to make of this world a blessed or an infernal place. In other words, He created beings with free wills. Are we entitled to say that some other arrangement would have been better? Nowadays, there are a good many people who talk as if they ought to have been consulted at the Creation; but they very rarely go on to say what advice they would have given.

For the truth is that while man has from the very beginning been free to make a mess of his life if he chooses, and has for the most part done so, there is only one alternative which so far as we can see would have prevented the ensuing mischief—viz., that men should have been made incapable of making a wrong choice, or thinking a wrong thought, *i.e.*, automata. We Christians are convinced that God might have done this if He wished to; but we are equally convinced that it would not have been worth doing.

Why is a human being of more value than many sparrows or than a traction engine? Because the sparrows generally behave like a machine, and the engine always does; whereas if the man is worth calling a man, you never know for certain what he will do next. There is always something incalculable about him which makes him interesting; but a machine, so soon as you have mastered its working, and to many people even before, is a thoroughly dull thing.

2. It seems clear that if Theists are right in saying that God created man free to make as many blunders as he likes, He lays also on man the duty of rectifying the blunders; and if man declines the task, the resulting mischief goes on and on indefinitely. Thus man not only makes heinous mistakes, but each mistake works itself out remorselessly, unless man himself interposes to check it.

Those are fundamental facts of life; the question is, are they inconsistent with the love or power of a Creator?

Now, so soon as we put this question fairly before our minds, we must, I think, acknowledge that the data for answering it *a priori* are wanting. That is to say, a philosopher who considers it only from outside has nothing to go upon; but that is not the case with a believer who has all his life acted on the assumption that God is a personal loving Father; because he has communed with this Being and got to know him with a certainty of conviction which every tragedy of life only strengthens.

Of course, all that is to the detached philosopher gibberish, but to the others is a bedrock fact of experience. Therefore the *a posteriori* position is wholly different from the *a priori*. Let us now consider the question from the latter point of view.

A vast number of *a priori* thinkers hold that creation is a failure; that, in short, the two principles stated above do not justify it. My contention is that they are pronouncing a wholly random judgment because certain considerations may be true, and if they are they make the whole difference.

For instance, it is open to any self-constituted critic of life to insist that the world would be a pleasanter place if the results of blundering or wrong-doing were less serious, but no one could pretend that it would be so salutary a place for the training of character. Now, suppose that one of the main objects of creation has been all along the production of strong, aspiring, disciplined, characters, and that discipline is interwoven with antagonism, and that antagonism means the existence of active personal evil. Supposing, further, that mankind is characterized by a strong tendency to indolence, vacillation, and self-indulgence; is it not clear that the only safeguard for them against fatal concession would be the knowledge that the results of sin would be terrible, and that any mitigation of these would mean an acceleration of speed down the easy decline which ends in ruin? Clearly the main objection to the scheme of things, viz., that there is too much evil and too widespread is, to a large extent, discounted; and while a huge number of thinkers believe these suppositions to be true, no one can bring any evidence against them except that, in his private opinion, they may be false, which is neither here nor there.

Briefly, then, we Christians contend that the hurly-burly of life lived by free beings is a more efficacious training of character than any other which can be conceived; and we believe that our Maker sets more store by character-training than by anything else. For if it is so, we can discern a purpose in all that is most appalling, most depressing, most bewildering in things that happen. And that purpose appears to us beneficent.

Next time I will try and estimate how far these considerations allow us to assume both infinite love and power in the Creator.

Unrest.

To most of us the days in which we now live are full of unrest. There is unrest among Christians about the meaning of their various creeds, among politicians about the growth of new political doctrines, among the workers about their conditions of life. In fact, the only classes who are not disturbed about such things are those who have been chloroformed by priests, or stupefied by unearned wealth, or stunned by abject poverty, to wit, devout Christians, the upper ten, and the denizens of our slums. To devout Christians, all religious questions are settled; to the upper ten, all social questions are settled; to the slum-dwellers there are no large questions to settle. The devout Christians feel sure of going to Heaven. The upper ten are sure of a very large and steady unearned income. The slum-dwellers are sure that they can never be worse off than they now are. All these are quite contented with things as they are, but nearly all others are seething with discontent and unrest. Different classes take different views of the situation. Christians think that Freethinkers are the disturbers of religious peace, for if all persons would only believe what they are told, there would be perfect

calm in the religious world; or if some Christian became excited by doing a little thinking for himself, he could soon be soothed to sleep by a dose of theological morphine. On the other hand, Freethinkers say that there would be no unrest if the orthodox people would mind their own business and not interfere with those who differ from them, and this is true, for where there is perfect liberty there will be perfect harmony.

The monopolizers of banking and land and trade think that if their victims would uncomplainingly submit to their exactions of interest, rent, and profits, and if the workers would gratefully accept such wages as they chose to give them, all would be as serene as a fine summer-day, and this is true, for where there is abject slavery there is no agitation. On the other hand, some workers, wealth producers, say that if each worker received all, and only, the value of what he produces, there would be no unrest, and this is true, for where there is no forceful appropriation of the products of one by another there will be no discontent.

All this being true, it would seem, at first sight, that the orthodox Christians and the monopolists are to blame for the prevailing religions and social unrest; but a glance at the actual facts may modify this condemnation. For what are the facts in each case? Take the realm of religion. Millions of people believe in the existence of a person who made this world, who gave them life and sustains it, who has performed certain acts which will take them to a place of everlasting bliss after death if they believe in those acts in a certain way; and that if they do not believe in those acts in a proper manner they will be plunged into a place of eternal misery after death. If they get consumption or paralysis they think they should be thankful to the great person who thus afflicts them. If their children are starving they think they should rejoice over so great an evidence of the loving kindness of the supreme father. They believe that certain men are the spiritual agents of the supreme person, and that, as such, they should be obeyed: that a certain organization is the repository of the will and wisdom of the supreme person; that a certain book is the expression of his mind and the declaration of his purposes. What follows? These millions of persons are more or less under the domination of certain men who take their money partly by force and partly by appeals to their sense of obligation to the supreme person and to their fears; who teach them to be submissive to their rulers as divinely appointed by the supreme ruler; who teach them to be contented with small wages because the supreme ruler separates men into classes and distributes wealth so that if they happen to belong to an unfortunate class it is because the All-Father wishes it so, and he will make it all up to them after they are dead if they properly believe what is told to them.

This is no exaggeration but a plain statement of the facts. Such superstitions are very injurious. They are injurious to the brain, for if a man is obsessed by a belief in a god of any kind, he is incapable of clearly seeing facts and reasoning about them. They are injurious to the body, for where they hold sway the man is in danger of being badly clothed and fed, and painfully overworked. I saw some men repairing the road the other day, and they were worse clothed and fed, and working harder than any wild animals have to work to earn a living. If there were no religious superstitions these men, and millions like them, would not have to work so hard for so little wages. But are we, therefore, right in blaming the elderly person in Rome who gets a sumptuous living out of the contributions of the workers? Or the well-fed parsons who spend so much more time in wrangling over their absurd creeds than in the study of

the great questions of the day? I think not, and I will explain why.

Suppose you go to one of the foolish people who give up part of their wages for the support of the clergy, the building of churches, and the running of religious institutions, one of those human beasts of burden who toil early and late, and endure many privations on account of the false religious teaching they have received, and try to explain to him the falsity of clerical pretensions. What happens? You are repulsed with scorn and anger. You discover that the poor dupe loves his deceiver passionately, regards you, who would serve him, as an enemy, and is ready to fight for the privilege of being humbugged and sheared.

It is, therefore, plain that as long as their brains are stupefied by superstition, the people are quite willing that the clergy should ride comfortably on their backs. Why, then, should we blame the clergy for doing what their people wish them to do?

Now consider the realm of politics.

Millions of people believe that certain persons have a divine or natural right to rule over them, and to take from them by force a large part of their wealth, much of which goes to maintain these rulers in the greatest luxury, while at the same time they make laws by the enforcement of which the friends of the rulers can also take a very large part of the workers' just wages.

What follows? Many millions of these workers are kept in the grossest ignorance and poverty. They toil for excessive hours under conditions destructive of health and happiness; and the almost boundless wealth they produce, except a trifle more than is necessary to keep them alive and enable them to breed more slaves for the rulers and their friends, is quietly filched from them. The Money Lord levies his huge tribute by means of the laws which enable him to monopolize the business of banking. The Land Lord rakes in his millions under the laws which enable him to monopolize large tracts of land. The Trade Lord gathers in his unearned millions by means of protective laws which enable him to organize huge trusts enjoying special legal privileges.

On every hand and at every turn these privileged monopolists grab some of the workers' just wages, for we cannot make a purchase without paying tribute to them in the increased prices caused by rent, interest, and profits. Not only so, but we are constantly menaced by the many diseases which find a fertile soil in the foul slums to which monopoly consigns the very poor.

These are not the wild vapourings of a Socialist crank; they are plain statements which can be verified with scientific precision. The present social system is not one under which all men work in fair and free competition, and thus obtain the full reward of their labour. It is one in which the vast majority are forced to work for a bare living, while the cunning and privileged few legislate for a gorgeous and unearned superfluity.

Must we, then, blame the rulers and their friends, the monopolists, with whom the clergy work hand in hand to bulldoze and defraud the workers, the priest chloroforming them while the monopolist goes through their pockets?

Not so; for the great majority of the workers will defend their rulers and shearers with all the infatuation of hypnotism. Tell them of a man who absorbs £1,000 a day without ever performing one act that would be useful among rational people, yet should that man happen to drive past, they will cheer him and run after his carriage as if he were a sort of demi-god, and talk for weeks of their great privilege in being allowed to actually see His Royal Uselessness.

Point out to them a dozen men, each of whom is receiving unearned wealth enough to enable him to build

a house of silver dollars, not one of which has been gained without the aid of some monopoly, and five minutes afterwards you will find them bowing and scraping to these very men.

The silky flattery and specious lying of the politician, the catch-penny bombast and braying of Bottomley and his kind, will lead the average worker into the din of the factory, or the darkness of the mine, or the reck of the office, there to work like a mule; or to the ballot-box, there to vote like a tool; or to the battlefield, there to die like a fool. Against these liars, who appeal to the lowest passions and most disordered imagination, he who speaks plain words of truth has little power.

But, urged into activity by the great War, the spirit of social unrest is walking the earth to-day as never before. Ancient dynasties have fallen, and the rotten edifice of caste and snobbery is falling. The clergy have shown themselves so cowardly and worthless, the politicians so inefficient, and the profiteers so shameless, that the old orthodox creeds, religious and political, are breaking down before the steady advance of Free-thought:—

Lo! while I look, fade cross and crown,
A shadowy host appears
The world's Freethinkers winding down
The long, dim aisle of years.
O heroes of the past, who bled,
Ye have not worked in vain!
O spirits of the noble dead,
Your fruitful thoughts remain!

G. O. WARREN (Major).

Acid Drops.

The Church of England is arranging for twenty clergymen to be sent out to France, to take part in a mission to the troops during demobilization. We would suggest that the soldiers inquire of these missionaries: (1) What steps the Church took to prevent the gross profiteering that has gone on during the War, which involved the fleecing of the wives and families left behind? (2) Whether the clergy have protested against the sending of the better grades of food to the wealthier districts; and if so, when and where? (3) What the clergy have done to call attention to the many social abuses and anomalies that the War has made prominent? Other questions will suggest themselves to soldiers, but generally we would remark that it is time soldiers raised a vigorous protest against their being preached at as though they were a lot of savages or a species of undeveloped animal.

The report of the Archbishop's Committee on Christianity and Industrial Problems is curious reading, for the committee points out the mote in the eyes of the employers and ignores the beam in their own. For example, one archbishop receives £300 weekly, and another £200 weekly, whilst many poor curates have to struggle along on a paltry two pounds. The bishops and higher clergy draw princely salaries, whilst organists, choirmasters, and choristers are notoriously ill-paid. Instead of creating fresh sees for well-fed clerics, the Church should see the rank and file have a living wage.

"Camels and Christians take their burdens kneeling," said Ambrose Bierce. The trouble is not ended there, for kneeling may cause "housemaid's knee." A religious contemporary points out that "it is very unwise to kneel on a hard floor, for besides being tiring in the extreme, it may injure the knee cap." The use of a soft cushion is recommended. We suggest, with due deference, the use of knee caps embroidered to suit the taste of the wearer.

The Presbytery of Glasgow is seriously concerned at the growth of Sunday bands and the general Secularization of the "Sabbath." But a committee appointed to consider the

matter could not offer anything in the shape of recommendations—due, probably, to the impossibility of getting anything done. Some of the ministers present at the meeting said the evening service had become a failure, and another parson, a Dr. Watson, read a letter from a soldier at the Front who was concerned over Sunday "desecration." Eventually notice was given of a motion asking the Corporation to arrange that facilities be given to the police for attending the Sunday worship. But why they should fall back on the police it is difficult to discern. The complaint does not come from the police but from the clergy, whose principal duty now seems to be looking for the grievances of the working-classes. Having neglected the workers so long, the clergy are now finding that they themselves are being neglected by the workers.

During the year, 486 actions of divorce were disposed of in the Scottish Court of Session. Decrees of divorce was pronounced in 479 cases and refused in 7. In 296 of the cases infidelity was the ground of decree, while desertion was proved in the remaining 290. Little attention is now paid to the injunction of the Church, which says, "Whom God hath joined together, let no man put asunder."

An Essex lady-farmer, charged with using wheat for poultry feeding, pleaded that she was obeying the laws of God rather than made-made regulations. A hard-hearted bench fined the lady £227.

A popular novelist, writing in a Sunday paper, pictures "one great republic, comprehending in time all peoples, the Great Democratic Republic of the Free Men of God, their first and only and perpetual president." Heigho! "God" used to be the "King of Kings," and now he is to be a "perpetual president." Perhaps it is only the journalist's little jest.

Canon Potter, formerly Vicar of St. Mark's Church, Surbiton, has had three bicycles stolen from outside his house. Evidently some of the Canon's neighbours have New Testament views concerning the community of property.

The late Rev. John Richard Armistead, of Sandbach, left estate of the value of £74,501. He will not get the glad eye of recognition from Saint Peter.

Churchmen are not all agreed as to the value of the five-million pounds advertising campaign. The Archdeacon of Warwick says that the appeals were "a pale imitation of the War Bond advertisements." But the Government officials considered newspaper advertising far more effectual than reliance on prayer.

The Vicar of Ardsley is in the deplorable position of one who had never seen a copy of the *Freethinker* until recently. Then he received one from an unknown benefactor. After reading the *Freethinker*, the vicar decides that "No one objects to a fair attack on religion, but blasphemy is revolting to all right-thinking people, and so are all lying and slanderous statements." The particular "blasphemous" and "lying and slanderous statement" picked out by the vicar is that referring to young, able-bodied ministers strutting about the country and allowing others to join the Army while themselves securing exemption under the Military Service Acts. And he quotes the Dean of York in refutation of the above statement to the effect that the clergy eagerly volunteered for service, and were "chafing and impatient at being held back."

Now let us see. It is certainly neither lying nor slanderous to say that the clergy did, after urging all to join the Army, obtain exemption under the Military Service Acts. It may be blasphemous to say this, but that is a question of taste. It is not true to say that a number of clergymen did not join the Army; but no one said that. The clergy did join—as chaplains, with a few rare exceptions. The civilian joined, and received his shilling or eighteenpence a day; the parson joined—not as a citizen, to take his share in the

fighting, but as a parson, to take about £500 a year. The civilian joined as a private soldier; the parson became an officer, with an officer's privileges and allowances. The Dean of York says he does not know of a single case where the younger clergy were not chafing at the restraint, and impatient to enter the Army. Well, but there was no law to prevent these younger clergy joining. The Acts did not say the clergy were prohibited joining the Army, only that they were not to be forced. The clergy could have joined at any time. It was the bishops who told the clergy not to go; and their obedience was complete and universal, and impressive.

The vicar of Ardsley thinks it a pity we did not speak to the soldiers before commenting on the clergy. In return we suggest that what the soldiers do say about the clergy would be worth the vicar's hearing. But the vicar says one must not take the *Freethinker* seriously—after spending a column on it. Well, we have taken the vicar seriously. Perhaps he would rather we didn't. But the poor man had never seen the *Freethinker* before, although we feel sure he will see it more frequently in the future. Hence there is every prospect of his education being bettered, and of finding out what is really thought of the clergy by soldiers and other people.

The Glasgow Presbytery had an interesting discussion last week on Sunday observance. Naturally enough, the Sunday band performances on the Green came in for a certain amount of denunciation. Curiously the denunciation was not unanimous. The Rev. Professor Reid said so long as the Churches advertised the special attractions of organ recitals and enlarged choirs they could hardly be jealous of the Sunday band services in the parks. Feeling that their protest would be of little avail they refrained from passing a motion of protest to the Glasgow Corporation. The Rev. Alex. McClellan said that the complaint everywhere was that the evening service had failed. Let them arrive at some definite conclusion as to when their services were to be held and then the rest of the day could be spent in rational enjoyment. What an advance from the time when it was an offence to look out of the window openly or carry water on the Sunday?

Wearing a pair of women's high-heeled brown boots and with a similar pair of a lighter shade in his possession, the Rev. Foster Raine, Army chaplain, was found hanging dead by handkerchiefs from the parcels rack of a first-class compartment in a train at Plymouth.

A speaker at a Pleasant Sunday Afternoon at Battersea said men of the type of Saint Paul were needed to-day. If the speaker's wish had been gratified, the pleasant Sundays would soon be replaced by painful Sabbaths.

Providence has quaint ideas of parenthood. The ravages of the influenza epidemic have reached the dimensions of a "plague," and tuberculosis is rampant all over the Continent of Europe. "His tender mercy is over all his works."

The *Times Literary Supplement's* editor headed a review of a work on natural history, "The Burden of the Ark." Obviously, that editor is behind the times.

On December 22 a Pastoral Letter, signed by the Roman Catholic Archbishops and the four R. C. Bishops of Holland, was read in all the Dutch Catholic churches. The Letter denounces Socialism as "taking into no account the eternal and unchangeable laws of God," and declares that "Socialism is in conflict with the Catholic Church. It is therefore forbidden to Catholics to be members of, or to support Anarchist or Socialist associations, and the sacraments must be refused to any Catholic so long as he remains an adherent of Anarchism or Socialism." We commend this utterance to those Socialists who believe they can "capture the Church for Socialism."

A reviewer in the dear *Daily News* refers to the "boldness" of a lady writer in "insisting on the humour of Christ" in a new version of the Gospels. It must be confessed that the humour of the "Man of Sorrows" is not very conspicuous in the older and more familiar stories.

"Returning officers are demanding drastic changes in civilian clothing," says a fashion paper. We hope, prayerfully, that this does not foreshadow a return to the coloured blankets of the twelve disciples.

"Starving Clergy" was the heading to an appeal for funds issued by the Bishop of London. One had visions of coroners' inquests and emaciated parsons, etc. It turns out that the average income of the London livings is only £300 per year. Well, naturally, people with only that income would like more; personally, we should feel quite happy with that amount guaranteed, but only the Bishop of London would feel justified in describing £300 per year as starvation. And how many of these clergymen would earn £300 a year in any other profession? We suspect the trouble to be that a number get less than £300, in order to allow for the large incomes of the remainder. There is the Bishop himself, for instance. Why not abolish the large salaries instead of this whining for charity for men getting six pounds per week?

An excellent letter, signed by "Layman," appears in the *Glasgow Herald* of the 24th inst., relative to the "Churches and Re-dedication." He says: "What the Churches, as guides to belief and guardians of conduct are called upon to do is, first of all, to state categorically how much of the Bible can be accepted as true and what parts of it are to be rejected as fabulous."

Death and Sleep.

ALL hail, ye cloudy shepherds, Death and Sleep,
How close your folds do lie—the near and nether;
But one hath stars and flying winds and weather
Above his silences in earth and deep;
The other doth the weary living keep,
And herds his flocks upon that toilsome tether,
Till oft the sad-eyed dreamers wake and weep,
And clasp cold hands and call on Death together.
One fold is murmurous with sorrow's sounds;
To still them lies beyond the shepherd's might;
But in the silent lodges of the mounds
Broods neither pain nor darkness, joy nor light:
No heart shall wake in tears; no grief nor wounds
Can fret the watchers of that endless night.

EDEN PHILLPOTTS.

RELIGION AND THE UNKNOWN.

The unknown is the terrible. We become fearful the moment we confront the incalculable. Go through the history of religions, consult the various accounts of savage and barbarous faiths at present extant, and you will find that the principle of terror, springing from the unknown, is the essential feature in which they all agree. This terror inevitably begets slavishness. We cannot be cowardly in this respect without its affecting our courage in others. The mental serf is a bodily serf too, and spiritual fetters are the agencies of political thralldom. The man who worships a tyrant in heaven naturally submits his neck to the yoke of tyrants on earth. He who bows his intellect to a priest will yield his manhood to a king. Everywhere on earth we find the same ceremonies attending every form of dependence. The worshipper who now kneels in prayer to God, like the courtier who backs from the presence of the monarch, is performing an apology for the act of prostration which took place alike before the altar and the throne. In both cases it was the adoration of fear, the debasement of the weak before the seat of irresponsible power.—G. W. Foote, "Flowers of Freethought."

To New Readers.

A LARGE number of people will make the acquaintance of the *Freethinker* for the first time this week. Many of these will, we expect, decide on becoming regular readers. For their convenience we print on the back page of this issue a subscription form for three, six, or twelve months. Those who do not care to order the paper direct from their newsagents or from one of W. H. Smith's railway bookstalls can, therefore, have it sent direct from this office on forwarding the necessary instructions.

For the information of these new readers, we may say that we have many new features in view which we believe will make the *Freethinker* more interesting than ever. These will be introduced as circumstances permit. In any case, the *Freethinker* will remain the only paper of its kind. It is a journal of which all who have any share in its maintenance are justly proud, and we feel certain that from this week we shall count a great many new friends and supporters.

C. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 5, Manchester; January 19, Birmingham.

To Correspondents.

- "FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—R. Allen (Thames), £1; J. Wilkins, 3s. 8d.; A. H. Smith, 9s.; A Friend, £3.
- T. HIBBOTT.—Will think over your suggestion of a portrait series.
- S. W. SOPER (East Grinstead).—Pleased to learn that the Labour candidate in your division avowed himself in favour of Secular Education in State schools.
- T. Y. R.—Thanks for addresses. Copies of paper have been sent.
- C. ELMER.—We are not reprinting that particular instalment of "Views and Opinions." We intend, however, issuing a volume of reprinted articles at as early a date as is possible.
- G. O. WARREN.—Received with thanks. The correspondence enclosed is interesting—a part of it curious. There would be no doubt of a fair audience if a suitable hall could be obtained.
- J. SANDERS.—Thanks for greetings. Please accept same, with thanks for help in securing new readers and to forward the cause generally.
- W. J.—Having stated our case, we leave the rest with the readers. Your own judgment shows this to be a quite safe policy.
- L. GAIR.—Thanks. The Bishop is living up to his character.
- G. WHITE.—Much obliged. Papers will be sent.
- Y. GRAISON.—Will see that copies are sent to the addresses supplied. Much obliged for same.
- J. HEWITT.—Ingersoll's *Works* is published in twelve vols., 8vo. The cost was £5. A set might be obtained at this office, but they would have to be sent for from America, which would mean cost of carriage.
- P. G. TACCHIL.—Certainly there is no need for an assurance of your good wishes and kindly feelings, but we appreciate their expression all the same. A happy new year to you.
- TAB CAN.—Much obliged. We share your feelings with regard to the alliance of the two parties.
- A. YEATES.—We do not quite see what it is of which you complain. Freethought means free expression of opinion or nothing.
- C. BUSH.—It is not at all a bad plan to strike out the "Christian" and write "Personal" on all forms where the full name is required. We always repudiate having a "Christian" name ourselves. Are we to return the papers you send? Literature is being sent. Hope you will get aid in your fight.
- A. H. SMITH.—All pamphlets, etc., ordered that are in stock have been sent. Have we done right with balance? Thanks for calling attention to the books named.
- W. T. CLOGG.—Very pleased to hear from you. We quite remember you and the old days, and hope soon to see you home.
- G. WEBB.—Paper is being sent. We welcome your New Year's greetings and remarks thereon.

A SCOTTISH CORRESPONDENT writes:—"In order to advertise the *Freethinker*, I sent an advertisement to a local paper as follows: 'Read the *Freethinker*, published every Thursday, price 2d. See special number for Jan. 5.'" This is quite an excellent way of helping. There is nothing like advertising; all we regret is that we cannot adopt the method on a sufficiently extensive scale.

S. R.—Will gladly send copies to address given.

A. WATTERS.—Sorry pressure on our space prevents the publication of your letter. Subscription received and registered.

R. JOHNSTON.—A notice of Mr. Wilson's death has already appeared in the *Freethinker*. We believe he deserved all the good things you say of him. Let us know if anything is done in the direction suggested.

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.

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.

A Happy New Year to all our readers. The past year has been one of trouble and struggle, and many of our younger readers have paid the last price in the just suspended conflict of Christian peoples. But we all faced it with the courage and confidence that comes of fighting on behalf of an unconquerable cause. So far we have won through with success. 1918 has been a year in which great advances were made—greater than has been the case for very many years in the history of this paper, and of the Freethought movement. 1919 should mark still further advances, and a greater measure of organization and consolidation. The movement was never so full of confidence, and never so united. It is a season of good resolutions, so let us all resolve to make the present year a memorable one in the history of Freethought.

To-day (January 5) Mr. Cohen commences his new year's lecturing in Manchester. He will lecture in the Co-operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick, at 3 on "The Influence of Religion on Racial Life," and at 6.30 on "Freethought, Religion, and Death." There will be music before the afternoon lecture, and Mr. Gwyn Taylor will sing before the evening address. Teas will be provided for those who wish to stay in the hall between meetings. We hope that efforts will be made by all interested to get the hall crowded out on both occasions.

The fact of the *Freethinker* dated December 29 being published on the 21st prevented any notice of Mr. Cohen's meetings at Partick on December 22. But these were too significant to pass without notice. The usual hall in the centre of Glasgow was unavailable, and so the handsome Burgh Hall in the suburb of Glasgow was engaged. This was not done without misgivings, and then the weather on the 22nd was all that could not be desired. Snow and sleet all the day made home and the fireside very attractive. But in spite of all drawbacks, the meetings were among the largest Mr. Cohen has yet had in Glasgow. The number of keen faced young men, and the muster of ladies in the audiences, bore excellent promise for the future. The experiment is likely to be repeated in the near future.

Will all Freethinkers in Belfast and neighbourhood make a special note that Mr. J. Effel will lecture to-day in the Fifth Labour Hall, 77 Victoria Street, Belfast, at 3.30 on "The Need for Secularism." This is the first step towards organizing in Belfast, and we hope there will be a good attendance.

Mr. J. T. Lloyd lectures to-day (January 5) in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham, on "Science, Religion, and Morals." The lecture commences at 7 o'clock, and we hope that Birmingham Freethinkers will do their best to see that

the theatre is crowded. It would be a good opening for the New Year to take an enquiring friend along.

Ladies especially should be interested in the opening meeting of the North London Branch Debating Society's Spring Session, when Miss Evans, of the Women's Freedom League, will speak on "Equal Pay and Sweated Housewives." The meeting commences at 7.30.

This week we issue four more of the four-page Pioneer Leaflets by Mr. Cohen. The titles of these are: *Dying Freethinkers*, *Does Man Desire God? Are Christians Inferior to Freethinkers?* and *The Beliefs of Unbelievers*. A large number of the previous issues in this series have been sold, and we expect a brisk demand for these new ones. They are well adapted for propagandist work, and, at the cost of two or three shillings, each one that is interested may do something in a quiet and effective manner. They are sent out at the rate of 1s. 6d. per 100.

A New Edition.

IMAGINE that, about the year 150, a literary man (whom I will call "J" for *John*) sat with his secretary, or friend (whom I will call "S"), in a quiet room in the City of Alexandria, overlooking the Mediterranean. Book-rolls, written in Greek, lie about—the book which we now call the Old Testament, and various other rolls, such as the works of the theological philosopher Philo, etc. The literary man has just bidden his assistant fetch a manuscript of the Gospel which we now call *Matthew*.

J.: My friend, I have often told you I was dissatisfied with the popular biographies of Jesus the Word.

S.: Yes, very often.

J.: For some time past I have been turning over in my mind the question of writing a better account—a new edition, which would present Christ as more manifestly glorious, in speech and act, than in the stories which the common preachers retail to the meetings of slaves and women in our back streets.

S.: In my opinion, nobody is better qualified than you, a student of the master Philo, to carry out this worthy enterprise.

J.: I thank you. There is no hurry. The thing needs to be executed carefully. But, just as a beginning, I wish you to run through the copy of *Matthew*, and pick out passages here and there, so that I may comment on them.

S.: Will you write notes?

J.: No, no. I merely want to observe the character of the anecdotes and sayings, and show you the style in which I should improve upon them.

S.: The document opens with a list of the ancestors of Jesus, and then it goes on to narrate how Mary gave birth to a son at Bethlehem, and how the Wise Men from the East—

J.: Ah, well! I shall cut all that out. It makes Jesus too cheap and sensational in his first appearance.

S.: But there must be a beginning, and with it the natural first event?

J.: Not for divine beings. I should be inclined to commence this way:—

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.....The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only-begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

You see, nothing about a baby, or Wise Men, or the Flight into Egypt.

S.: It certainly sounds more sublime. Well, then Jesus attains manhood, is baptized by John, and then the Devil takes him—

J.: What's that? Repeat it.

S.: The Devil takes him up into the Holy City, and sets him on a pinnacle of the Temple.

J.: Lamentable! This is what they tell the Christian mob on a Sunday! I will have none of it in *my* Evangel. Go on.

S.: Jesus, seeing the multitudes, ascends a hill and preaches the Sermon on the Mount: and this kind of incident—the people listening gladly to the Master—is very common all through *Matthew*.

J.: That is not my idea of the fitness of things. I shall represent Jesus as constantly surrounded by dull and cantankerous people. In fact, the world will hate him. Darkness will hate Light—that would have pleased the admirable Philo.

S.: The Sermon on the Mount ends with a picture of Jesus, enthroned as Judge, bidding the wicked to depart from his presence.

J.: Another false note. I would rather that Jesus should say:—

If any man hear my words, and believe not, I judge him not; for I came not to judge the world.¹

However, proceed.

S.: Jesus continues preaching in Galilee, and at last arrives at Jerusalem, just before his death.

J.: Oh, no! that is too much like what any ordinary prophet would do. No, I shall see that Jesus, after a few days in Galilee, journeys straight to Jerusalem, cleanses his Father's sacred house of the traders, and throws out a significant hint that his Temple-body, if destroyed, will in three days live again. Well?

S.: The Twelve Apostles are sent out round the country to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils —

J.: Nothing of the sort! I shall not permit these ignorant men at that stage to work such marvels. These mighty deeds must be left to the Master.

S.: Jesus walks on the water towards the ship in which his disciples are rowing, and Peter walks on the water to meet him.

J.: Why, that is like a Greek comedy! No, no, I shall leave Peter out, and let Jesus march in solitary grandeur.

S.: On a high mountain Jesus shines in transfiguration, and converses with Moses and Elijah; and his three favoured disciples—Peter, James, John—behold the scene, and Peter proposes to build three booths for the three shining ones —

J.: Upon my word, it would just suit one of those religious plays which they perform in the working-men's clubs in Alexandria or Rome!

S.: At length, Jesus rides in triumphal procession into Jerusalem, the people loudly saluting him —

J.: Yes, why?

S.: Why do the people salute him?

J.: Yes.

S.: Because, says *Matthew*, he was the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.

J.: Not at all! What a tame story! No, my friend, I can supply a more appealing motive than that. The people salute him because he has just raised Lazarus from the dead after the corpse had lain in the tomb four days. And some of the persons who saw the miracle shall accompany him as he rides into Jerusalem.²

S.: But *Matthew* does not even mention the raising of Lazarus!

J.: Nor any other Evangelist up to now. But I will display the Man who claims to be the Life as master

¹ Compare *Matthew* vii. 21-28 with *John* xii. 47-49.

² Compare *Matthew* xxi. 10-11 with *John* xii. 9-18.

of corruption itself, and not merely reviving persons who were dead but a few hours. This miracle will appear the most stupendous of all.

S.: Well, then we come to the Last Supper, after which the apostles sing a hymn, and they all go out to the Mount of Olives.

J.: Sing a hymn, indeed! Is that all? Why, at that solemn moment, Jesus ought to utter the longest of his discourses—a kind of farewell testimony. I shall begin like this:—

Let not your heart be troubled; ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions.....

And so on, to the length of at least four long Psalms.

S.: Next comes the trial before Pilate, when Jesus is silent.

J.: Silent!

S.: Yes, the book says, "he answered him never a word."

J.: What stupidity! Here is just a fine opening for the Man who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, to say some very significant things. For example, he might say—

Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.

After that, I will represent Pilate as asking, in his poor, Pagan, bewildered way, "What is truth?"

S.: The crucifixion follows, and Jesus dies with a sad cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

J.: No such thing. How can we suppose the Word who is God can be forsaken by God? No, no! Jesus shall just say, "I thirst"; that is, he thirsts for return to the divine Mansions. Then he shall calmly conclude, "It is finished," and breathe his last.

S.: A remarkable episode occurs now, and, of course, you will repeat it? There is an earthquake; graves are opened, bodies of saints rise, and walk into the Holy City and appear to many.

J.: That may suit the Alexandrian mob. It would spoil my Gospel.

S.: The *Matthew* book then describes the Resurrection, and how certain women find the sepulchre empty. They are departing, they meet Jesus, and kneel, holding his feet in worship.

J.: Quite a mistake. Such an incident is gross. I shall have a little scene in which Mary Magdalene sees Jesus, and he cries to her, "Touch me not," and explains that worship is not due to him till he has ascended to his Father.

S.: Then Jesus appoints a meeting with the Eleven Apostles at a mountain in Galilee, where they worship him, but some of them doubt.

J.: Some doubters out of eleven! And what happens?

S.: Oh, nothing more is said.

J.: Great heavens! these unintelligent Evangelists have not the capacity of Balaam's Ass!

S.: What will you do?

J.: One of the eleven, namely Thomas, shall doubt like a Sadducee. He shall hold out stoutly in this manner:—

Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

Jesus will appear, offer the proofs, and Thomas will believe.

S.: Your Gospel will be a great improvement on the others.

J.: Well, you see I have learned profound truths from my master, Philo. I doubt if this *Matthew* ever read a line of Philo's works.

The reader who finds this imaginary conversation rather surprising is recommended to compare the first Gospel, *Matthew*, with the fourth Gospel, *John*, and judge for himself. His careful search may discover even more indications of the purpose of the fourth Evangelist to issue a new, and superior, edition of the sacred biography. Other interesting problems arise, as, for instance, the question whether the conscious creation of Christ-stories by the early Evangelists (of whom there were many more than four) should be classed as an act of fraud. In my opinion, it should not. I entirely and cordially acquit the Gospel-writers of any base motive, though I allow that such a question calls for a full psychological study. I am simply recording my view.

But, in any case, a comparison between *Matthew* and *John*, such as I have briefly sketched, should reveal to thoughtful people strong reasons for treating the Gospels as very human documents.

F. J. GOULD.

Religion After the War.

V.

(Concluded from p. 665.)

The churches are growing empty, not because people no longer care for the deeper things of life, but because those who speak in them no longer seem to be fearlessly following the truth.....There is, I think, a fear lest a frank acceptance of the whole truth, and a frank repudiation of what was once held to be the truth, but is now rejected by all intelligent persons, might undermine the basis of religion, and that the laity, once told that they need not believe any longer in Jonah and his whale, might be tempted to discard all religion whatsoever. It is not quite certain that the fear is entirely groundless, but it is quite certain that whether it is or not the danger must be faced. Because there is no longer any chance of blinking it. The laity do not believe in the prophet's remarkable adventure as it is, and nothing will ever make them believe in that sort of thing again.—M. H. Temple, "The Failure of the Church."—*The National Review*, January, 1918, pp. 573-574.

The Church seems to ignore the ability of the laity. It has not reckoned with the force of an advancing tide of criticism born of the Church's own supine stupidity; its long and tacit acceptance of unprovable facts; its aggressive attitude towards science; its blind adherence to proved errors; above all, its belief in its own appointed supremacy over the minds and souls of mankind.—"Rita" (Mrs. Desmond Humphries) "*The Wrong End of Religion*," p. 5.

As we have remarked, the popular criticism of the Bible which has hitherto been almost confined to the Secularist and Rationalist, has at last found vent in the popular press. For instance, "Rita," the popular novelist, in her little half-crown book, *The Wrong End of Religion*, observes (p. 30): "The Bible, in the light of even the mildest criticism, shows itself full of improbabilities and contradictions.....No Christian household is without its copy of the Scriptures; no Christian family without their daily instruction. Thus, the little child hears of Adam and Eve, and Cain and Abel, the conduct of Abraham and Sarah, of Esau and Jacob, the abominations of the Israelites, and the cruel and flamboyant declarations of the prophets, long before he can understand what place such records have in the daily meaning of life."

The child, continues "Rita," hears of God, the All-Powerful and All-Good, who "created man in *His own image*, and yet that Image was sinful. Else how came to sin? From whence sprang sin? Who made it, if not that Creator who created *everything*? Comes question, comes answer. "The Devil, the Father of Lies

and all things evil was the author of sin." "But *who* made the Devil?" "Run away and play, my child. You mustn't ask too many questions" (p. 31). And that is all the satisfaction a child will obtain. "In the morning the Old Testament is read; in the evening the New—and between both stands an array of eager questioning, never rightly answered, or never answered at all. The first inculcated duty of childhood is obedience, the second credulity. 'It is so, because I tell you so,' says the head of the Christian household in true patriarchal fashion.....for the head of the family knows only too well that the same riddles have puzzled himself, the same childish curiosity been aroused and compulsorily stifled."

Then there is the defective morality of the Bible "that inconsistent command which must have astonished Moses: 'I will harden Pharaoh's heart,' and then punish him because it is hardened. How can a child hear this statement and not be struck by its inconsistency and injustice?" (p. 34). "Rita" goes further, and declares: "I assert boldly that many portions of the Bible are quite unsuitable for either family prayers or public reading. Every ordained cleric will know what I mean" (p. 29).

It has always been a mystery to us that the very same people who are on the lookout for indecency in picture palaces, and calling for the suppression of music-halls, yet force the Bible—which contains more plain, downright filth and indecency than would be allowed to appear in any book published in this country to-day—into the hands of the children about whose morals they are so solicitous!

The Churches are really in an agonizing dilemma. The Churches are half empty, and nothing will stop the leakage? They are being told on all sides that if they do not bring their teaching more in accord with science they will lose the remainder. They must cease to teach, say their critics, the Bible fables of the Creation, the Fall, and the Deluge as revealed truth.

But if they ascend the pulpit and confess that they have been wrong in all these matters, they stand the risk of losing the older members of the congregations, who, having been trained in these beliefs in early childhood, have never questioned the literal truth of them. And they know very well that this eleventh-hour concession to truth, honesty, and common sense would not bring back the deserters who have left in disgust.

It is all very well for a few democratic and semi-rationalistic clergy of the Established Church to implore the masses to attend their services. But if the working classes, taking the invitation literally, were to throng to church in their thousands, it is perfectly certain that the present occupants would retire through the opposite door. For the Church is the last refuge of autocracy and conservatism.

A greater menace still to the Churches is the cry for science teaching in our schools and colleges. The War has taught us the value of science if it has done nothing else. But the Churches hate and fear science. In the past they tried to strangle it—fortunately unsuccessfully. It is mainly owing to the predominating influence of the clerical party in our Public Schools and Universities that it has been ignored and suppressed so far as possible.

There can be no compromise between Science and the Supernatural; it is a fight to a finish. Either science will be victorious or it will be destroyed. It is not that science destroys this or that tale of the origin of man, or the Deluge, or Jonah and the whale. It is the spirit of science itself that is in opposition to any kind of supernatural interference with the laws of Nature. It sterilizes the soil in which religions grow and flourish.

For instance, the chemist in his laboratory, weighing chemicals in his sensitive balance to the thousandth part of a grain, would smile if someone suggested that spiritual influences might deflect the indicator, although he might believe in spirits in the abstract. He does not allow for them; and when he enters his laboratory he closes the door on them. He knows that if you mix certain chemicals at a certain temperature and pressure you will infallibly get the same results, providing the chemicals are pure. The astronomers compose the *Nautical Almanack* for navigators, in which are recorded the astronomical events for three or four years ahead. The only reliable prophecies are those made by science. And there is no warning given in the *Nautical Almanack* that these things will happen unless God interferes and makes other arrangements. No allowance is made for such interference. Any person who suggested to the editors of the work that God might stop the sun again, as the Bible records that he did to enable Joshua to complete the slaughter of the enemy, would be regarded as a lunatic.

And so it is in all the sciences. The gods and spirits are warned off from the ordered domain of science. They are not needed, and with the growth and progress of science they will infallibly disappear. W. MANN.

Man's Feline Friend.

III.

(Continued from p. 669.)

MOSLEMS are usually very considerate towards the cat, and the Prophet of Allah was a sincere lover of the animal. It was in Moslem Cairo that the first refuge for homeless and starving cats was established. This institution was founded in the thirteenth century by the then reigning Sultan of Egypt and Syria, a potentate who was passionately devoted to the feline race. This humanitarian institution still survives, but it has fallen on evil days. The Cairo refuge was once well endowed, but in 1909 the funds proved insufficient to provide the full food rations for all its feline dependents.

The cat is kindly treated in Constantinople, and in Florence a cloister serves as a retreat for the animal. In Switzerland, in London, and the provinces, diseased and starving cats are painlessly destroyed. Among others, the Animal Rescue League, a body founded by the late Kate Cording, and whose managing committee includes Sir George Greenwood, is a model institution. In 1916, 32,159, and in 1917, 30,957 "stray and unwanted domestic animals" were painlessly killed by this League.

One tradition concerning the creation of the cat traces this event to the Deluge. It is alleged that Noah became alarmed at the depredations of the mouse among the stores of the Ark, and he prayed most earnestly for protection. The patriarch's prayer was answered, for the lion sneezed, and a couple of cats sprang from his nostrils. The myths and legends concerning the cat are very numerous, and are common to most parts of the Eastern hemisphere, and range from Eurasia to the Cape in one direction, and to the Japanese Islands in the other.

Most assuredly no other domesticated creature, and probably no other animal, has suffered so much from human ignorance and superstition as the harmless and necessary cat. And it may be safely asserted that at no period in the world's history were such fiendish cruelties inflicted on the cat as during the long, dark ascendancy of the Christian Church. With the development of the doctrine of wizardry and witchcraft in the later Middle Ages, the Devil and his imps were firmly believed to

possess the power of transforming themselves into cats and other animals, particularly at times when those sinister spirits were most actively engaged in deeds of darkness. Superstition and her twin sister Credulity were boundless, and the most fantastic stories never lacked most greedy listeners, who were only too anxious to spread the marvels they had themselves received, and these tales lost nothing in the telling as they passed from mouth to mouth among the people. Every movement of the cat became a presage of good or evil, and these eerie fancies still linger with us, and with many remain unshaken. Despite the plain fact that one old wives' tale is directly contradicted by another traditional belief treasured in the very next parish, this exercises little influence in discrediting these almost hereditary superstitions. Even now, it is a common saying that a sable feline is the bearer of good luck, and that a black stray cat should always be welcomed. It is also thought that a newly built house is all the better if a sable cat is carried into it before it is occupied in England, while in Ireland it is deemed unlucky when removing to a fresh abode to take the house cat, and the poor creature is frequently deserted.

Black cats were for centuries associated in Teutonic countries with misfortune and death. The presence of a sable puss in the vicinity of a grave was a certain sign that the departed spirit of the person buried there was in the custody of Satan. The habitations of witches usually contained dark-coloured cats and skulls, and the weird women were reputed to ride on the backs of black tomcats when journeying to their nocturnal revels. Witches were long alleged to possess the uncanny art of transforming themselves into black felines, and these unlucky animals frequently shared the doom of their mistress, and were burned alive with her. It was an orthodox article of popular belief that hags in league with the Evil One could be transformed into cats nine times in succession. This absurd notion seems to have been connected with the vulgar superstition that a cat has nine lives, and this ancient delusion still lingers in rustic circles in England and elsewhere.

In Scandinavia and Southern Europe the sable cat was long regarded as the companion and confederate of the witch. Black felines were supposed to favour ghost-tenanted dwellings, and to indulge in midnight orgies. Among seafaring folk the opinion is widespread that at times when cats become unusually frolicsome a tempest is about to rage. The accidental drowning of a cat is full of foreboding, and the sudden appearance of a strange black cat on board a ship is of sinister omen. Yet we learn that for generations, at Scarborough, the sailors' wives were convinced that they could ensure the safety of their spouses' lives at sea by keeping a sable cat in the house, with the consequence that "anyone else had a poor chance of possessing a black puss, as she was nearly always stolen by one of these women."

May marriages are commonly spoken of as unpropitious, and in several English counties the birth of kittens in the merry month was long viewed with aversion. According to some village wiseacres, a May kitten will prove useless as a vermin-hunter when mature, and will also serve to attract snakes into the cottages. There is a proverb in Huntingdonshire that a May kitten makes a dirty cat. These superstitions are seemingly associated with old-folk fancies concerning the May Day revels of wizards and witches. In closer touch with truth are the lines:—

A cat in May is worth a load of hay;
A cat in June is worth a silver spoon;
A cat in July isn't worth a butterfly.

Obviously, the kittens delivered in May have all the summer before them to enable them to develop into

strong and healthy cats. June kittens have less time to mature before winter arrives; while the July catlings are still immature when the cold and dreary season sets in.

As we have noted, the cat was highly valued in Saxon and later days; but with the development of the doctrines of demonology, the witchcraft-mania assumed menacing proportions in the later Middle Ages, and was destined to culminate in an epidemic of direst cruelty in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. During this period the cat was pitilessly persecuted. Although the Renaissance was immensely more modern in general outlook than any earlier period of Christian history, it proved in matters of demonology most sullenly and obstinately obscurantist in its attitude towards enlightenment. As Withrington reminds us in his learned essay, "Dr. John Weyer and the Witch Mania":—

In the enlightened sixteenth century, anyone who professed his disbelief that witches could ride through the air, change themselves into cats, or make caterpillars or thunderstorms, would have had an excellent chance of being burnt as a heretic or concealed sorcerer (*Studies in the History and Method of Science*; Oxford; 1917).

This should warn us of the danger of assuming that, because many traditional dogmas are dead or dying, we may therefore relax our efforts towards the emancipation of the human intellect from the influences of dark and sinister superstitions which in our day, as in earlier generations, have enlisted the sympathy and support of men eminent in letters, science, and pseudo-philosophy.

Yet, at the dawn of the seventeenth century, the light was beginning to dispel the shadows. In 1618 an edict was published in Flanders, prohibiting the ceremony of hurling cats from the high tower of Ypres, which had long been observed each season in the second week of Lent. The revolting custom of plunging living felines into the flaming fires, which formed a leading feature of the celebration at Metz of the festival of St. John at Midsummer, was not, however, abolished until the eighteenth century, when the humane wife of Marshal d'Armentieres induced her husband to order its suppression. Previously, it is recorded—

the magistrates used to assemble with much solemnity in the public square, and place a cage containing cats on a funeral-pile; to this, with great parade, they set fire. The people believed that the frightful cries made by the poor beasts were evidence of the sufferings of an old sorceress, supposed long ago to have been transformed into a cat when she was about to be burned.

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

An Open Letter to Satan.

YOUR INFERNAL MAJESTY,—

I trust you will not be offended at this mode of address. It is only from a sense of the fitness of things that it is used. It is not swearing, though possibly you would not object if it were.

You are no doubt aware that a terrible war has raged on this planet for more than four years, that millions of men have been slaughtered, millions of homes desolated, thousands of millions of money wasted, and the entire life of the world and the progress of civilization checked, embittered, and spoiled in every direction that even your imagination could conceive. In fact, the world is now sometimes described as "hell with the lid off." It is, of course, possible that, although this state of things is revolting to us, it may afford you supreme gratification. But I hesitate to accept that view. I hesitate because in very influential quarters statements have frequently been made which imply that the responsibility for the War does not rest with you. An eminent dignitary of the Established Church of this country, for

instance, has proclaimed that the War was sent by God, though I am not aware that he was specially authorized by God to make that declaration. Another ecclesiastic has ventured, on similarly dubious authority, to assert that the real originator of the War was yourself; while the ruler of our principal enemies has many times publicly and loudly emphasized his conviction that God is his friend and ally (presumably in a subordinate capacity only), and that for that reason the conflict was certain to result in his favour. I cannot help suspecting, however, that the term "God" is merely a euphemism for Satan, and that you must have been whispering in the Kaiser's ear: "Codlin's the friend, not Short."

Now, if it is true that God brought about the War; if it is true that he favours one set, or perhaps alternately both sets, of combatants—there are admittedly wide differences of opinion on each point—it would appear that you, who have for ages been represented as the author of all evil, have been slandered and misunderstood in a very strange manner. In the estimation of most people war is an orgy of wickedness and horror. Some, however—a celebrated German historian, for example—regard it as a wholesome medicine, administered by God at irregular intervals for the correction and eventual improvement of the human race. The latter assertion is not altogether convincing, for it would seem that a being of infinite goodness and unlimited power could without the least difficulty administer the needful medicine in much less unpleasant ways. He has, it must be supposed, the freest access to the minds of his creatures, which some theologians tell us are but temporarily detached fragments of his own essence, and could at any moment, without deviating from the strictest justice, and with no compulsion of their wills, influence them in the direction of truth and reason, self-restraint and mercy. I apologize for referring to qualities with which you are not commonly assumed to have any particular sympathy. But as they are supposed to be acceptable to and inculcated by God, I am puzzled to understand how they can be ignored by so many of his ministers and followers. Is it not possible that they have made a mistake? Have they not been attributing to their deity qualities and modes of action which belong to you? Again I hesitate, not so much because it is too easy a way out of the difficulty to attribute this frightful calamity to the alleged author of evil, as because I have no assurance that any author of evil exists. Assuming Your Majesty's real existence, I am logically bound to assume also the real existence of your rival. The facts of life, however, constrain me to doubt the actuality of either. As far as one can see, the world goes on precisely as if neither of them really existed as a personality. Nor does it seem necessary to invoke a personal origin for either good or evil when a simpler hypothesis lies ready to hand. In man's own capacities and experience we have a sufficiently full and clear explanation both of the origin in a general sense of what we term moral evil and of the recent painful and monstrous example of its virulence.

It is unpleasant, and perhaps daring, to question Your Majesty's actual existence, and if I am wrong in doing so I can only crave your forgiveness. I ought possibly to do the same with the other personality to whom the War has been attributed, but I confess to an uneasy feeling that his forgiveness might be withheld, for I have been unfortunate enough to offend him more than once already. In my humble judgment it is certainly wiser to attribute the barbarism which has been desolating our unhappy race to our own unbridled ambitions and imperfect sense of international right. I do not ask you to punish the guilty parties, for on the common supposition it is most unlikely that you would consider them blameworthy. Nor do I propose to demand justice at the hands of an Almighty Creator, for if such a being exists it would be farcical to expect him to punish people whose responsibility is as nothing compared with his own. With all respect for that venerable personage, I must decline to admit that it is just to make men evil, and then punish them for being evil. Fortunately for your own reputation, you have not this embarrassing charge to answer.

What I would like Your Majesty to do is simply to send an answer to this letter. Assuming that you really do exist (though I regret that your postal address is not known to

me), it is probable that you are a regular reader of this journal, and if you will be so kind as to clear up my doubts I shall feel grateful. God has been asked these questions so many times without result that many persons have become a little discouraged. My question is whether God, or Devil, or man, was responsible for the War.—I have the honour to remain, respectfully yours,

JUSTITIA.

National Secular Society.

FELLOW MEMBERS,—May I remind you that you can effect a great saving in the office postage and stationery by sending your annual subscription to me without waiting for a formal notification that they became due on January 1, 1919? I shall make a point of arriving early at 62 Farringdon Street on January 7, and hope I may find myself snowed under by the cheques and postal orders that have arrived, and that it will be necessary to expend postage on sending out receipts only.

Best wishes for the New Year to all from

EDITH M. VANCE, *General Secretary.*

Obituary.

The readers of this journal will regret to learn that Mrs. Frances Moss, the wife of Mr. Arthur B. Moss, died on December 21, 1918, after a very long and painful illness. She passed away calmly and peacefully, as she herself desired. Her simple, loving nature was full of devotion to her husband and children. Her unflinching sympathy with her husband's public work was of material aid to him in the performance of his varied public and civic duties. She was a good Secularist and a good woman, beloved by all who knew her. She was buried at the Camberwell Borough Cemetery, Forest Hill, on December 27, and the undersigned read a Secular Burial Service at the graveside.

WM. HEAFORD.

I regret to record the death of Harvey Jones in Liverpool, December 19, in his eightieth year. Till his sixtieth year he took a leading part in advanced thought in his native town, Shrewsbury; then, coming to the Manchester district, he joined the Freethinkers there. The son of a Methodist preacher, he caught the spirit of Freethought in early life, and retained it without the slightest change till the peaceful end came. A great reader and skilful in argument, he looked forward with great glee to the regular arrival of the *Freethinker*. He and his wife reared six sons and two daughters, who, in the main, follow in his their father's footsteps. He was brought to Manchester and laid with his wife in the Weaste Cemetery, a Secular Service being held at the graveside.—J. SANDERS.

We regret to record the death of Mr. Samuel Charles Blake, of 67 Cross Street, Islington, which occurred on December 19 at the age of fifty-nine years. Mr. Blake was a valiant Freethinker, and worked faithfully in the "best of causes" for many years. He was a member of the old Islington Branch, and rendered valuable services under Mr. Bradlaugh. He was buried in the Islington Cemetery on Tuesday, December 24, when a Secular Service was conducted at the graveside. To his widow and family, in their bereavement, we tender our sincere sympathy.—J. T. L.

Remember how many bright souls are living courageously, seeing the good wherever it may be discovered, undismayed by portents, doing what they have to do with all their strength. In every land there are such, no few of them, a great brotherhood, without distinction of race or faith; for they, indeed, constitute the race of man, rightly designated, and their faith is one, the cult of reason and of justice. Whether the future is to them or to the talking anthropoid, no one can say. But they live and labour, guarding the fire of sacred hope.—George Gissing.

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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. E. C. Saphin, Lantern Lecture—"Genesis and Jesus."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Miss Evans, "Equal Pay and Sweated Housewives." Open Debate.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., "William Morris and the New Ministry."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. J. T. Lloyd, "Science, Religion, and Morals."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N. S. S. (Clarion Cafe, 25 Cable Street): 7, Mr. J. Hammond, "Religion and Science."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Co-Operative Hall, Downing Street, Ardwick): Mr. Chapman Cohen, 3, "The Influence of Religion on Racial Life"; 6.30, "Freethought, Religion, and Death."

SWANSEA AND DISTRICT BRANCH N. S. S. (Dockers' Hall, Swansea): Joseph McCabe, 3, "The Origin of Christianity"; 7, "The Twilight of the Gods."

Population Question and Birth-Control.

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Principles and Objects.

Secularism teaches that conduct should be based on reason and knowledge. It knows nothing of divine guidance or interference; it excludes supernatural hopes and fears; it regards happiness as man's proper aim, and utility as his moral guide.

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Secularism declares that theology is condemned by reason as superstitious, and by experience as mischievous, and assails it as the historic enemy of Progress.

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