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Views and Opinions.

The Gifford Lectures and the Value of Bequest.

The Gifford Lectureship is a standing proof that no matter how carefully a constitution is drawn up, all will ultimately depend upon the men in whose hands its administration lies. Trust deeds, written instructions, articles of association, may be devised in the most unambiguous language; their real purpose can always be defeated unless the right sort of men are entrusted with power. As Lord Gifford devised his endowment, he intended that no man, whatever his opinions about religion, should be debarred lecturing under its auspices. The trustees have seen to it that only "safe" men were selected. And of the two men whose opinions were of a more heterodox character, a curious circumstance attaches thereto. Professor Tylor gave a course of lectures many years ago, and these have never appeared in book form. Professor (now Sir James) Frazer gave a series of lectures in 1911-12 on the "Belief in Immortality" among the lower races, and these have appeared in book form. But this course was to be followed by another, dealing with the same belief among the higher races. This would have brought in Christianity. But these lectures have not yet been delivered, and one would like to know why. It is quite clear that Lord Gifford's avowed intention has not yet been realized by the trustees. One can always evade or misuse a written constitution if one so desires.

* * *

Does the World Display Purpose?

Our complaint does not in any way detract from the merit of the courses of lectures already delivered and published. And in any series of lectures with a claim to catholicity on the existence of God, the last issued volume, *Moral Values and the Idea of God*,¹ could legitimately claim a place. Professor Sorley's purpose is one that properly comes within the scope of the Gifford bequest. It is to decide what bearing the facts of the moral life and the existence of ethical judgments have upon the belief in God; or, as Professor Sorley would put it, on our idea of the ultimate reality. And provided we grant certain assumptions—partly implied and partly stated—then it may be admitted that the lecturer makes out a very plausible case. One great assumption is that of purpose in the world; and for this, from the stand-

¹ By Professor W. R. Sorley. Cambridge Press; 16s.

point of pure science, there exists no warranty whatever. Reduced to its simplest terms, what the world gives us is a series of phenomena to which we assign an end and a purpose. But that the end is only a convenient assumption is shown by the fact that any end reached is only a proximate one, the "end" becoming in time a link in an unending sequence. And that "purpose" is likewise a pure assumption, not an objective fact, is also shown by the egoistic nature of the assumption. To see in the existence of animal and vegetable life proof of "purpose," and that purpose the maintenance of human life, is agreeable to the human. But if we were to endow a cabbage with consciousness, or a sheep with adequate reflective powers, we question whether the purpose would be quite so apparent or so praiseworthy. The illustration is a simple one, and is chosen because it is simple. But no matter from whence the example is taken, the same principle will apply. "Purpose," in brief, is not a material fact, but a psychological one. We ascribe purpose to that which is useful to our designs or frustrative of our desires. Professor Sorley realizes that the teleology of the Paleyan school must be discarded as useless. Others have come to a similar conclusion. What we would like to see produced is any argument of "purpose" in the world that is free from the fatal fallacies of the discarded Paleyan dialectic. We have no hesitation in saying that they are all worthless.

* * *

Morality and God.

Professor Sorley's specific purpose is to seek in the world of moral ideas validity for the idea of God. Of ordinary methods he is doubtful, and at times contemptuous, as when he speaks of a "non-interfering God" as "a sort of absentee landlord who failed even to get his rent." But morality he believes to be in some way "connected with the realm of existence"; moral ideas "apply directly to conscious agents"; their existence implies a purpose or plan in the universe; and the aim of the book is to "seek in that which *should be* for the ground of that which *is*." On this point our difference is vital and fundamental. In the first place, the realization of good cannot be the plain purpose of God, since evil is also realized. Professor Sorley seeks escape from this difficulty by the hypothesis of human "freedom," which is only interjecting a fallacy to escape an absurdity. The whole argument here is obviously framed to meet the difficulties attaching to an hypothesis that never ought to have been propounded. The world is created and ruled by a God that desires the moral perfection of mankind. But the world does not, on examination, harmonize with any such theory. The facts being plainly against the theory, the next suggestion is that God's desire is frustrated by human action. Asked why this should be so, we are informed that God left man "free" to act, freedom being essential to the training of character. Having dealt with this point last week, there is no need to go over the same ground again. But it is quite plain that the latter theory is only called in to justify the first. And if we ask for

evidence of the first we are referred to the second with which it is in complete agreement. And yet it does not really escape the criticism offered. The initial choice in the wrong direction must have been decided by man as he then was; and had God made him differently the choice might have been less disastrous. In other words, you cannot have God as creator of the world without saddling him with the responsibility for its character. This is the rock on which Professor Sorley's vessel ultimately breaks. * * *

Naturalism and Morals.

The naturalistic conception of morality starts the very opposite to the position taken up by Professor Sorley, and its results harmonize with all known facts. Morality, if we exclude human and animal nature, is not a natural fact at all. You cannot speak of natural forces as good or bad except in relation to us. Good men and bad men are as strictly relative to human societies as heat and cold are to a sentient organism. Morality, says Professor Sorley, "begins with judgments about good and evil," which is not strictly correct, the truer view is expressed a little later in the book, namely, "the moral life precedes and supplies the material for moral ideas." Morality, under all its forms and in all its varying phases is, primarily, an expression of conditions under which associated life is possible and profitable; and, secondarily, a conscious formulating of rules suggested by such experience. Grasp that vital truth, and the "mystery of morality," to use a common phrase, disappears. And, for that reason, we do not agree that man considered as a solitary being would provide the material for moral judgment—we doubt whether he would be a man—except in a biological sense, under such conditions. Conduct to be good must be good for something, or in relation to something. And the only medium to which we can rationally relate conduct is that supplied by a society of similars. It is for this reason that morality becomes, as Professor Sorley says, a selective principle. It is selective because it properly emphasizes the importance of conduct that is of value to the group. The individual in this matter is, strictly speaking, a creation of the group mind, even when he finds himself in temporary conflict with some of its manifestations. * * *

Camouflaging God.

We have dealt with only one or two of the many points raised by Professor Sorley's suggestive and provocative work. Ample material is there for half-a-dozen articles. We should liked to have dealt, for instance, with his distinction of aim between the moralist and the scientist. For us the aim seems fundamentally the same. Particularly challenging is the assertion that natural selection is limited to life preserving and cannot account for the growing ascendancy of wider interests. Here the issue turns on what is covered by "life preserving." The Naturalist would argue that intellectual and æsthetic interests, in so far as they contribute to efficiency and the enjoyment of life, are decidedly factors in preserving life, and so have a survival value. Something might also have been said as to the identification of a fundamental "Reality" with God. The latter is a late philosophical conception; the former is a primitive religious one, and the two have no necessary connection. "God" has never meant in religion what "Reality" has meant in philosophy. I agree here with Sir James Frazer, who, in commenting upon this extension of the term, says:—

I venture to protest against it in the interest not only of verbal accuracy but of clear thinking, because it is apt to conceal from ourselves and others a real and very important change of thought.....The misuse of the name of God may resemble the stratagem in war of putting up

dummies to make an enemy believe that a fort is still held after it has been evacuated by the garrison.

Sound science has no use for God in the old and legitimate sense of the word. Careful thinking finds it worse than useless when paraded under a new form.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

New Testament Factions.

CHRISTIAN apologists often speak of apostolic times as the happiest, purest, and most harmonious period in the history of the Church. The Apostles were specially inspired men, governed and guided in all their thoughts and actions by the Holy Ghost, who ever since the day of Pentecost filled to overflowing both them and the societies established by them. But the moment we critically consult the various books contained in the New Testament we experience a complete disillusionment. Even from the Apostles themselves we learn that their converts were frail persons who could not, as a rule, be described as doing things "without murmurings and disputings," or as being "blameless and harmless, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." The members of the Corinthian church were "carnal," given to "jealousy and strife," guilty of "fornication, and such fornication as is not even among the gentiles," and divided into at least four irreconcilable parties. Paul was profoundly ashamed of them, as his first Epistle abundantly shows. But not even the Apostles were the ideal characters their modern champions portray them. Paul was by no means easy to get on with, as is evident from several open quarrels he had with prominent co-labourers; and Peter, too, is reported to have played a cowardly part on more than one occasion. From 1 Cor. i. 12, the inference is inevitable that there existed from the first different and conflicting versions of Christianity itself. Paul claimed that he had received his version of the Gospel by a direct revelation from heaven, and unhesitatingly pronounced every other version a wicked perversion. As a matter of fact, there were two Christianities desperately struggling for supremacy in the primitive Church, and for a long time it was very doubtful which would be victorious. The one was zealously advocated by the Apostle James and his fellow-workers at Jerusalem, and the other by the Apostle Paul, whose sphere of labour was among the Gentiles. The gravity of the conflict between the two is obviously, perhaps deliberately, minimized by Luke in the Book of the Acts; but no one can read the Pauline Epistles without perceiving that reconciliation was impossible. Two fundamentally different Gospels were being preached, which, in the nature of things, could never be harmonized. Paul visited Galatia and won numerous converts to his Gospel; but emissaries from Jerusalem followed him there, characterizing his message as false and himself as a deceiver, to whom the Galatians lent them believing ears. Hurt to the quick, this is how Paul subsequently expressed himself:—

I am astonished at your so soon deserting him, who called you through the love of Christ, for a different Gospel, which is really no Gospel at all. But then, I know that there are people who are harassing you, and who want to pervert the Gospel of Christ. Yet even if we—or if an angel from heaven, were to preach unto you any other Gospel than that which we preached unto you, let him be anathema. We have said it before, and I repeat it now—If any one preacheth unto you any Gospel other than that which you received, let him be anathema (Gal. i. 6-9).

To realize the vastness of the difference between the two Gospels it is only necessary to compare one of the

great Pauline Epistles, such as Galatians, Romans, or Ephesians, with the Epistle of James. In the former the death and resurrection of Christ, rendering possible acceptance with God, forgiveness, justification, and sanctification to all who believe, occupy the forefront, while in the latter not one of the so-called essential doctrines of grace is so much as mentioned, the whole emphasis being laid on the indispensableness of a strictly moral life, although there runs through it a thinly disguised attack on the Pauline dogma of justification by faith alone.

Now, the question naturally arises, whence came the Pauline Gospel? That it did not originate in Palestine is self-evident to every student of comparative religion; but in the Gentile world it had been well known long before Jesus was heard of. This is frankly admitted by Professor Bacon, of Yale University, in his admirable little volume, *The Making of the New Testament*. He says that "Paul's experience was not so much that of a Palestinian Jew, as that of a Hellenist, one whose whole idea of 'redemption' has been unconsciously universalized, individualized, and spiritualized, by contact with Greek and Hellenistic thought" (p. 51). In the same connection, the Rev. Dr. Bacon observes, further, that "the influential religions of the time were those of personal redemption by mystic union with a dying and resurrected Saviour-god, an Osiris, an Adonis, an Attis, a Mithra." Dionysus, the God of wine, also, died a violent death, rose again, and ascended to heaven, and salvation was obtainable through faith in his name. In Pauline Christianity you cannot point to a single original idea. Take the Lord's Supper, or Eucharist, and you will find that though peculiar to Paulinism in its Christian form, it is one of the oldest religious institutions in the world. Professor Gilbert Murray remarks that there was imbedded in Orphism "a belief in the sacrifice of Dionysus himself, and the purification of man by his blood." The worshippers of Dionysus ate his flesh and drank his blood, and doing so they could say, with Teiresias:—

Then in us verily dwells
The God himself, and speaks the thing to be.

In the dialogue called *Critias*, Plato is clearly thinking of some such festival when he speaks of the immolation of a bull in Atlantis and the drinking of his blood mingled with wine, a ceremony which was accompanied by an oath to be just in all dealings. But, curiously enough, the Eucharist was not an institution recognized by Jewish Christians. Paul expressly states that he was indebted for his knowledge of it to a special revelation from the Lord Jesus himself, the natural inference being that prior to that the Church had not observed it—had not even heard of what the Lord Jesus did in the night in which he was betrayed. Now, had Jesus said and done on that most memorable night what Paul so vividly summarizes, is it conceivable that the disciples generally could have been ignorant of the fact, or that, had they known of it, they would not have communicated that knowledge to the Apostle? The only reasonable conclusion, therefore, is that Paul's narrative of the institution of the Lord's Supper is wholly fictitious. Even so cautious a critic as Conybeare admits that "it rests on no basis of fact, but, like much of Paul's conception of Jesus, is partly, or wholly, an *a priori* construction of his own mind" (*Myth, Magic, and Morals*, p. 251). To thoroughly appreciate this point, it must be borne in mind that the First of Corinthians is the oldest Christian document extant, and that, in all probability, the narrative of the Last Supper in the Synoptic Gospels was taken from it more or less literally; but it is not without significance that the non-Pauline portions of the New Testament are either wholly silent on the subject,

or else by implication offer opposition to the introduction of so wholly Pagan a rite into Christianity. Discussing the last point Preserved Smith says:—

When the Jewish faction expressed itself, it was to brand Paul as "a false apostle and a liar" (Revelation ii. 2), and, "Balaam, who taught the children of Israel to eat things sacrificed to idols and to commit fornication" (Rev. ii. 14). Not only the Jews, but the disciples of John at Ephesus and Damascus anathematized him as the perverter of their law, "the man of scoffing." That the great schism in the early Church does not occupy a still more important place in the New Testament is due partly to the fact that Peter and Paul apparently divided the field into two spheres of influence, the Jerusalem apostles agreeing, for the sake of a tribute, to allow Paul to preach what he wished to the Gentiles. It is also due in part to the complete triumph, after the destruction of Jerusalem, of the Pauline faction and to the desire of irenic historians like Luke to smooth everything over and make all appear according to Paul's Gospel from the beginning (*The Monist*, April, 1918, p. 192).

J. T. LLOYD.

The Churches at the Cross Roads.

The religion of the English is a quotation; their Church is a doll; and any examination is interdicted with screams of terror.—Emerson.

It is said that many devout Christians have been turned to Freethought by reading theological works by eminent divines, in which the arguments have been pious but unsound. And after reading the Rev. J. H. Shakespeare's new book, *The Churches at the Cross Roads* (Williams & Norgate) we might even suspect the author of being an unfriendly critic of the Christian Religion, instead of being a doughty defender of the faith as preached at the Memorial Hall.

The Churches at the Cross Roads simply raises the old question, "Is Christianity a Failure?" Mr. Shakespeare does not admit the soft impeachment, but he cannot have many illusions on the subject. He sees quite clearly that both the Church of England and the Free Churches are in a parlous state, and he even suggests a reunion between the Government Religion and the Nonconformists on the very slender basis of a compromise on the question of episcopacy. This is a very unlikely solution, for the arrogant High Churchmen are far more intent on breaking Nonconformist heads than counting them. And what community of interest is likely to hold together masses of men and women who are poles asunder on political matters? Nonconformists care as little for the saintship of King Charles the First as Churchmen do for ideals of Human Brotherhood.

It is highly significant that Mr. Shakespeare has so little to say on the very important subject of the antagonism of the soldiers to religion, for the troops do represent the nation. If he had consulted such a book as *The Church in the Furnace: Essays by Seventeen Church of England Chaplains* (Macmillan), he would have found ample testimony to this hostility. Here are a few opinions from the padres themselves:—

The Rev. P. C. T. Crick says "the average soldier is not conscious of any allegiance due from him to the authority or teaching of the Church." Canon Hannay points out that priests "complain that religion has no hold on the majority of the men." The Rev. G. A. Studdart-Kennedy asserts that "there is in the Army to-day a great deal of Agnosticism disguised as indifference."

It is such testimony from army chaplains that renders still more significant Mr. Shakespeare's silence concerning Freethought. For whilst he sees plainly the

terrible condition of all the Churches, he points to petty items of reform which are of an altogether minor importance, and ignores the graver issues involved. It is as if a doctor should prescribe sticking-plaster as a cure for cancer. It is simply special pleading to ignore facts which clash with our limitations, however goody-goody, rather than simply and sincerely to admit the facts and face the consequences.

The Churches are at the cross roads, but, unfortunately, these turnings lead to Lambeth Palace, Westminster Cathedral, or the Wesleyan Central Hall. They are intellectual blind-alleys, and cannot attract other than believers who are already in the folds of the various Churches. For the one universal Church has never had actual existence in the world, and never will. The Roman Catholic Church has tried very hard for many centuries, and her failure was never more conspicuous than at present.

The reason of the failure of the Churches is as plain as a pikestaff. All the Christian Churches are entombed within the covers of the Hebrew Scriptures. Men and women ask for the bread of knowledge; the Churches offer but the stone of savage superstition. The teaching of the Churches is no longer of any practical use, and their dogmas are as dead as the dodo. The passage of the years will make it less and less interesting. The Christian Churches represent but a stagnant backwash in the brook of knowledge. The great river of human thought rolls on, and bears mankind further and further away from the spiritual ignorance of the past, further and further from the shadow of the cross.

MIMNERMUS.

Freethought versus Evil.

II.

(Continued from p. 24.)

THE human tragedy lies in this: that, although mankind concentrates its attention almost exclusively upon the primitive basis of human life, it fails even to deal with these things sensibly or with intelligence. How can we expect humanity to rise into something higher and finer when such a continual and increasingly terrible struggle for the primitive animal adversities occupies the public consciousness? Any intellectual development towards sanity necessarily involves the eliminations of the necessity to struggle like animals for food, clothing, and shelter. This struggle which insistently occupies the brains and instincts of the people against all other odds must be destroyed. Further, nothing can effectively destroy it save Reason and Rationalism. How, apart from Reason can we hope to eliminate the belief in War? Does not the struggle for material things necessarily involve the germ concept of war, and contain the seeds of national hatred, commercial rivalries, struggles for power over and control of these elementary things for which the masses are always struggling?

The germs of war exist in the very bread we eat; they exist in every street and in every trade rivalry in every civilized city in the world. The Freethinker realizes this truth so vividly that his neglect by the people produces a great sorrow in his heart; and from this sorrow, or even anguish, is born a fierce hatred of all those popular institutions which exist to perfectate these conditions of life which thwart the destiny of man. He is by nature a Universalist; nations and nationality do not exist for him. Nationality is merely an accident of birth over which no man has control. Further, he knows that men and women are much the same all the world over. There is no more in the fact of national rivalry for him than in the rivalry between two big business houses in

the City, or in cut-throat competition in general. One is on a large scale the other on a small scale—nothing deeper than that. Nations fight each other for exactly the same reasons that commercial rivals fight each other; they never fight for ideals. The so-called "ideal," which is now a feature of the popular newspapers, clerical and otherwise, the ideal of destroying Militarism, is absurd. What, asks the thinker, is Militarism? It is the highly organized means by which one nation and all nations seek to protect or to gain material things. How, then, can this attempt to gain or to protect material things be destroyed by its own function? War is now functioning; material things are being protected; fought for, lost and gained. The people of each country support the War just as in peace time they supported the system by which they were sweated and robbed of a decent life. When the War has ceased functioning—when material things have been protected, or gained, or lost, then the same old struggle for material things will continue as before—on a less terrible and less obvious scale. Nothing has really happened apart from the fact of highly organized conflict upon a gigantic and monstrous scale. The germ of unreason remains after the War—the fight for life goes on—and those who have renounced all, sacrificed homes and limbs and health in the cause of war, will realize this fact sooner than anybody. The bitter truth to face is this: that the peoples of two Protestant countries—England and Germany—have, with all the others, been drawn into an avalanche of Death without a murmur against their fate. The thinker has resisted the Evil mentally, and in many cases physically; as of old, he has been crucified. The people have been existing under conditions which make thought a penalty—which has systematically prevented thought. The people, collectively, cannot think. They are devoid of collective initiative. They are incapable of resisting the desires of powerful rulers, or even of protecting themselves against evil and ignorance by reason; as, of course, they could. They exist, actually, for the diplomatic and commercial ambition of their exploiters, and fall into a monstrous death-trap shouting with an excitement indicative of their stupidity.

Place the thinker into a padded cell, and allow the people to continue creating misery for themselves and for posterity. This is the desire of the rulers of "Christian" democracy! The people obtain the conditions of life which they demand. If we have rotten social conditions, the people have the power to alter them—to convert them into better social conditions. The *will* alone is lacking. Nothing could prevent the majority from doing anything they desired. Nothing could oppose their combined will with success. But there is no *thought*, there is no *will*—no courage or idealism; there is, as yet, no real desire.

The universal heart cannot expand under the existing conditions of life. It beats quickly and feverishly; it throbs with anxious fear—it aches unseen—fearful and terror-stricken; it is a tortured and inflamed heart, but it is not inflamed, nor is it tortured, with a desire for the annihilation of the conditions which irritate it. This heart is agitated by the struggle for a secure place under the conditions existing—a struggle which it accepts without criticism or bitterness. It does not beat quickly through having felt the dynamic force and infinite possibilities of life. Nor does it beat with an excitement known only to the artist and revolutionary—the excitement of overthrowing and recreating. The universal heart labours under a load of misery which could be removed by thought.

The only sane and possible conclusion that the thinker can arrive at logically is that the people collectively are

neither capable of conceiving ideals or of appreciating them when they are expressed by higher types than themselves. There is a mental vacuum in the popular consciousness as solid as the thought-reality of the idealist or the metaphysician. The average brain cannot formulate ideas, neither can it assimilate them when they are formulated. Here, then, it must be obvious to the thinker, is a very serious obstacle to progress. Will collective thinking ever relegate the primitive necessities to their natural basis in life and leave itself free to deal with higher issues of a cosmic nature. In other words, will life ever become sufficiently conscious of life to take unto itself a diviner form?

Religion to-day, as ever, is merely an accessory to the existing conditions which environ man. All dynamic force has gone out of religion. It must be apparent to all intelligent people that the Church to-day is an ally of the prevailing concepts and of the material conditions which are in force—conditions which we one and all suffer under. The Church never takes a definite, or, indeed, a vague stand against the materially commercial concepts which dominate all highly civilized countries.

ARTHUR F. THORN.

(To be concluded.)

Last Days—1918.

If you're waken, call me early,
Call me early, mother dear,
For I would see the sun rise
Upon the glad new year.

—Tennyson's "May Queen."

LEARNED long ago, these simple, beautiful, pathetic lines endure in memory's ear, and come ready to the tongue. Successive sunsets and sunrises suggest them, contrasting ephemeral and fragile things with the cosmic and everlasting. Eternal splendour gilds the pathway of the sun. Clouds and damps and darkness obscure his glory from the local gaze, or the earth heels slowly eastward, and it is night; but the sun reigneth and shineth evermore, and makes of envious fogs and mists a more splendid mantle.

It was the close of a day at the end of the year 1918. The War was over. The Coalition was returned. God was in his heaven—but evidently nowhere else—all was right with the world. It had rained for two days—copious, constant, icy rain. The brown and naked woods were lost in cold grey mist; the elemental followed the political inundation—the two things are in no way connected, however. The ancient and inexorable Clerk of the Weather takes little note of tinpot and gimcrack politicians—there are no Joshuas in these days—the most of whom, compared with Paine or Lincoln, are but as Hercules to Harlequin, or as Shakespeare to Harry Lauder.

Well, Sir, and readers, I was sitting in this envious disgruntled mood, in the deepening twilight, under the pall of drab and dismal skies, listening to the lonesome wind, hopeless of clearing horizons, resigned to fate—when, lo, between the woods and skies in the west, and glimmering through the trees, appeared a long quiet line of broken light, that slowly extended above the departed slanting sun, that glowed and paled, lingered and lessened, for the space of an hour, austere and gentle, solemn and serene, the soft, surprising, august and splendid obsequies of a common, drab, and dismal day.

Heaven's light for ever shines,
Earth's shadows fly.

Man's common, patient, honest, heroic task ends in the sundown splendid and serene, and is the assurance of the sunrise, and the dissolving shades of reason's dawn.

As Thomas Paine, in sublime and simple analogy, remarks: Such is the irresistible nature of truth that all it asks, and all it wants, is the liberty of appearing. The sun needs no inscription to distinguish him from darkness.....

Anon, the clouds withdrew from the whole round dome of night, and all the starry host came out and glassed themselves in the quiet seas that lisped and murmured as in the mild air of midsummer's eve.

The last day of the year, in Scotland called Hogmanay, dawned gloriously bright. The east gave colours to the west, as though the sun were setting there, and touched with fairy light and shade the walnut mountain peaks, austere with powdered snow.

A. MILLAR.

Acid Drops.

The theory of the "sacrifices" of the chaplains in the Army receives a nasty knock from a letter by "Rifleman" in the *Church Times* for January 10. He says, writing with experience of the Army in war and peace:—

In peace times religion in the Army was a hopeless failure, especially in England; it was slightly better abroad. Throughout all my experience I never saw a chaplain enter a barrack-room or camp excepting, in the latter case, for the usual parade service. Nobody seemed to really care whether a soldier was religious or not.

It looks as though what most of the clergy were after was a well-paid job and limelight heroics.

The fondness of the clergy for having their fingers in every pie is once more shown by the announcement that the Rev. H. D. L. Viner has been appointed Chaplain-in-Chief of the Royal Air Force. The only qualification that should appeal to the flying men is that the Founder of the Christian religion made a memorable ascent two thousand years ago—and never came down again. Perhaps the Chaplain-in-Chief hopes to meet his Saviour in the skies.

A London daily paper recently had a column article on "Books that Put One to Sleep." The writer made no mention of the Bible. The chronological portions of the Old Testament ought to make any one tired.

According to the newspaper paragraphs (which are, presumably, paid for), the Young Men's Christian Association is to re-erect the recreation huts, formerly used for the soldiers, in various parts of England, and to "transform English village life." So grandiose is the description of the aims of the young Christians, that we are not quite certain whether they wish to re-convert the yokels to Christianity or whether they only wish to teach them billiards and cigarette-smoking.

The agitation for the abolition of the church parade in the Army is bearing fruit. The *Evening News* (London) says: "Nothing in a soldier's life frets him more than this parade.it is not popular, and is certainly doomed to abolition."

A bold headline in an evening paper reads "Archangel Fighting." Why not? Even Christians have a fondness for cutting each others' throats

Says the Archbishop of Canterbury, "The fighting is, we hope, over, and the cry is everywhere raised, 'Let our clergy now come back to their parishes.'" We don't move in a clerical circle, but we confess to some surprise that this cry is being raised everywhere. We have heard complaints about the slowness of demobilization, but have not detected a clamour for the return of the clergy. We suspect that the Archbishop's statement is incomplete. What he should have said was, "The clergy are crying everywhere for the chaplains to come home." And we are sure the Army will raise no serious opposition.

The dear clergy so often assert that the world-war was caused by the sins of the British people, and, further, that the great conflict would prove a purifier of national morals. The criminal statistics do not bear out the purifying process. Of seventy-seven charges in the January Sessions of the Central Criminal Court, bigamy committals numbered no less than twenty-three.

Mr. Ex-President Roosevelt once raised a storm in the States by proposing to banish the motto: "In God we trust" from the American coinage. This was more than the descendants of the Pilgrim Fathers could stand, and Roosevelt hurriedly abandoned the proposal. Hence the Americans still profess their trust—in an abstraction. All others strictly cash.

Little Portland Street Unitarian Chapel, which has discontinued its services, once numbered Charles Dickens among its worshippers. Although Unitarianism is not a popular form of religion, it is curious that two of the most widely read writers, Dickens and Longfellow, belonged to that body.

Christian Evidence lecturers and other admirers of the Design Argument will learn with pleasure that a Plaistow lad has two thumbs on one hand. The fact was noted when the boy attempted to enter the Navy.

The Central Board of Finance of the Church of England has a new secretary. Christian Churches have more money now than in earlier days. The first Christian Church was sold up for thirty shillings.

The Archbishop of Canterbury is deeply concerned over the sufferings of the Russian Church. We should be rather more impressed by this if the Archbishop had been a little more concerned during all those years which the Russian Church was persecuting the Russian people. And the Archbishop might have spared just a little sympathy for the many thousands of Jews who have only recently been murdered by Polish Christians. But it is the French Revolution over again. As Carlyle said, the dumb millions suffer generation after generation, and no one is perturbed. The shrieking thousands are served with a dose of their own medicine, and their cries rise to heaven.

In reply to an appeal from the Metropolitan of Odessa for the protection of the Orthodox Russian Church, the Archbishop expresses deep sympathy, and desires that the prayers of Church people should be offered for the Russian Church. Prayers! We can imagine the Muscovite ecclesiastic saying, "Call you this backing of your friends?"

The restraints of religion are not very marked in the case of William Henry Woodward, sidesman of St. Saviour's Church, Reading, who was fined £5 for stealing money from the church collection.

Sir William Peterson, Principal of McGill University, was paralyzed while addressing a meeting at Emanuel Church, Montreal. Had he been addressing a Freethought Congress, there would have been a singularly impressive moral.

Commenting on the appointment of Sir F. E. Smith to the position of Lord Chancellor, the *Daily News* burst out: "Has the great family of Smith ever climbed so high before?" A member of the "great family" founded the religion of the Latter Day Saints, better known as the Mormons. This is as important as the work of a lawyer.

Rev. R. F. Stephens, late Chaplain to the Forces, is strongly in favour of a shortened Church service. The Bishop of London also approves. So do we. So will, we believe, most people. The striking thing about Church services is that everybody wants them shorter. Indeed, if the bishops will shorten their services by one half we feel sure that a large number of people will emulate their generosity by throwing over the other half.

Rev. Archibald Davis, formerly curate of Holy Trinity, Clapham, was fined 10s. at the South Western Police Court for being drunk and disorderly.

The whirligig of time brings in its revenge. According to the *Daily News*, the gallant Admiral Blake, who was buried in Westminster Abbey, and whose bones were afterwards thrown out, "has climbed to a window in St. Margaret's Church, Westminster." A gentle reminder of Christian ethics in practice in an Age of Faith.

The late Theodore Roosevelt once described Thomas Paine as "a filthy little Atheist." The phrase contained three lies in three words, but Roosevelt never apologized.

A case which had been adjourned for five weeks to enable two schoolchildren to be coached into the meaning of an oath and how to take it, was tried at the Shoreditch County Court. We wonder who did the "coaching"—a policeman or a parson?

Those naughty journalists, although they often turn Christian for half an hour, seldom read the Bible. A report of an aeroplane ascent of 30,500 feet was dubbed "the highest ever" by one enterprising pen-pusher. The poor man had quite forgotten the story of the ascension in the Gospels.

There is a vacancy for a one-armed collector at St. Saviour's Church, Reading. One of the sidesmen there was recently summoned for stealing from the collection on six distinct occasions. Marked coins were put in the plate, and the theft discovered by this means. The defending solicitor said that it was sacrilege for one Christian to set a trap for another in "God's house." Nothing was said about stealing in God's house.

A bold advertisement of a Salvation Army "Day of Devotion" informs the public that "Children, with or without their parents, will not be admitted." The little ones will be spared the ordeal of hearing "the bells of hell go ting-a-ling, a-ling."

Two months after the declaration of the Armistice, the Archbishop of Canterbury has screwed his courage to the sticking place and visited the British Expeditionary Forces in France and elsewhere. Such heroism deserves the erection of a stained-glass window in St. Paul's.

January 18—25 is to be, on the advice of a committee of Established and Free Churchmen, to be set aside as a week of prayer for reunion among the Churches. Fancy, after all these centuries, having a week's prayer that Christians may be united in worshipping the same God! What a comment to the brotherliness on the power of the Christian faith! For observe that these Christians can and do unite on all sorts of Secular Services and aims. The one thing they cannot unite on is religion. A curious thing is Christian love!

"A Mother of Three Sons Killed in Action" writes to the *Church Times*, protesting against the War Graves Commission removing the crosses placed over the graves of soldiers, and placing headstones there. We think the writer is justified in her plea. Our own protest was against the creation of a huge cross which was to symbolize the sacrifice of all who had suffered. But if the relatives of dead soldiers wish a cross over the grave, it seems to us they have a moral right to have it there. And we hope our sense of justice is too strong to permit us to ask for ourselves a freedom which we deny to others.

At a South Acton church a chapel is to be added to commemorate "the fallen heroes of the war." During the War the dear clergy were exempt from military service; and at the end of the War they enlarge their churches in memory of the men who did fight.

O. Cohen's Lecture Engagements.

January 19, Birmingham; February 9, afternoon, Blaina; evening, Abertillery; February 10, Abertillery, Debate; February 23, South Shields; March 2, Swansea; March 16, Leicester; March 23, Manchester.

To Correspondents.

"FREETHINKER" SUSTENTATION FUND.—B. G. BROWN, 5s.; J. McNicoll, 2s. 6d.; G. E. Macvie, 8s.; Sam Hampson, 2s. 6d.; McIntyre, 2s. 6d.

N. S. S. GENERAL FUND.—Miss E. M. Vance acknowledges:—Joseph Close, 5s.

J. STANWAY.—Sorry to get the news in your letter. If we can be of help in any way please let us know.

F. C. WYKES.—Thanks for New Year's wishes and calendar. Both very welcome.

R. EWING.—We can only repeat our reply to you at the close of the lecture: (1) Not being a Christian, we evidently lack your capacity for sustained hatred; (2) hatred is more active while it lasts, but love or friendship will outlast it. There are sound physiological reasons for this; (3) offended personal vanity and narrowness of outlook, we should say, are the chief conditions for a display of malignancy. We have observed it more active in these circumstances than in others.

E. E. STAFFORD.—Thanks for New Year's greetings. Can't you hurry up with your demobilization?

B. G. BROWN.—Shall be very pleased to see you when you come to London. Please advise us of the time if possible.

C. T. JONES.—We note your correction that "Harvey Jones" should read "Henry Jones" in the obituary notice published in our issue of January 5. We regret the error.

J. PARTRIDGE.—Your note reached us too late for use last week; but we are pleased to have the news that Mr. Lloyd was at his best and delivered a fine lecture. We never knew him to deliver a poor one.

A FREETHINKER (Barford).—Quite a good letter, and very much to the point.

A. T. (Northampton).—Sorry we had to keep you waiting, but your letter required lengthy and careful advice, as we have only one pair of hands and are working singlehanded some things have to wait. One day, when we can afford to get help, we hope to secure assistance.

R. HINDLEY.—(1) We have often pointed out that the positive aspect of natural selection is not preservation but elimination. The writer who overlooks that fact has missed a vital point; (2) there is no discussion worth bothering about as to the truth or fact of evolution. The evidence can be mastered by any one in a week's study. The important point to-day is the interpretation of evolution in relation to current views on life in general.

J. SMITH.—Very sorry to hear of Mr. Clough's death. We remember him as a very sterling worker in the Cause. Please convey our sympathy to the relatives.

W. GUNNING.—We note your appreciation of Mr. Palmer's "Story of Evolution," and agree that evolution and Theism are incompatible. That is the point that needs driving home.

W. J.—We do not believe in boycotting, and do not aim at preventing people reading books on superstition, but to develop their intellect against the influence of such works.

The Secular Society, Limited, office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

The National Secular Society's office is at 62 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connection with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, Miss E. M. Vance, giving as long notice as possible.

Lecture Notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C. 4, by first post Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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

All Cheques and Postal Orders should be crossed "London, City and Midland Bank, Clerkenwell Branch."

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

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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

Sugar Plums.

To-day (January 19) Mr. Cohen lectures in the Repertory Theatre, Birmingham. The subject, "Freethought, Religion, and Death," should prove interesting, and, we trust, the local saints will do their best to advertise the meeting. The lecture commences at 7 o'clock.

At the N. S. S. Executive meeting on Thursday last sixty-two new members were admitted, and two new Branches of the Society—one at Ogmore Vale, South Wales, and one at Belfast authorized. The latter Branch represents the only one in Ireland, and, as it is making a good start, we are hoping for gratifying results. But, altogether, the constant stream of new members, and the formation of new Branches during the past three years, is most gratifying. And when it is remembered what are the obstacles to propaganda, such as largely increased railway fares, greater cost of advertising, difficulty in procuring halls, etc., the advance made is all the more pleasing. Nearly three years ago we said that we hoped to see established a large and well-organized Secular Society, and the growth of the N. S. S. brings that hope nearer realization. We said, then, that there should be a Branch of the N. S. S. in every town in Great Britain, and we hope our friends will give us their assistance in seeing that this is done.

We are pleased to learn that the new Belfast Branch of the N. S. S. made a good start with its propaganda on January 5. Our contributor, J. Effel, lectured to a good audience on "The Need for Secularism," and the result of the meeting was the enrolling of a number of members, a good sale of literature, and the decision to take the hall for twelve weeks for lecturing purposes. The Secretary is Mr. J. Lessels, the City Studio, 3 High Street, and we hope that all Belfast Freethinkers will make it a point to rally round the new Branch. There is splendid material, and great need for a Freethought campaign in Belfast.

Will Branch Secretaries and others please note that all lecture notices and reports of meetings must reach this office by first post on Tuesday morning, otherwise we cannot guarantee insertion in the current issue of the paper.

We are publishing almost immediately a new edition of the *Jewish Life of Christ* issued some years back by Mr. Foote. This is a translation of the *Sepher Toldoth Jeshu*, with an elaborate introduction and notes by G. W. Foote and J. M. Wheeler. The work itself is of mediæval origin, going back probably to the twelfth or thirteenth century, and is based on the Talmudic story of Jesus being the illegitimate son of one Pandira. It is a curious and interesting document, and important to all students of the Christian legend, no matter what their views. And the notes are all that a student would desire. The original price was sixpence, and we are republishing at the same figure—which in these days of high prices is worth noting.

We have many other publications on the stocks. Mr. Cohen's *Woman and Christianity* is waiting to be machined, and will be issued at an early date. A pamphlet by Mr. Mann, on *Science and the Soul*, is in preparation, as also a couple of volumes of Voltaire's writings, which will prove acceptable to a large circle of readers. We also hope to issue at an early date a new edition of Mr. Cohen's *Determinism*, which has been out of print for some time, and for which there is a constant demand. Later we intend publishing a volume of literary essays by the late G. W. Foote, which we are sure will be welcomed. Finally, we have in contemplation the issue of a series of pamphlets of a special kind, which will make a strong appeal to Freethinkers of all classes. Too much cannot be done in this direction. Lectures should be no more than an introduction to study; and so far as our resources permit, we intend that neither side shall be wanting.

A friend of this paper recently inserted, at his own cost, a small advertisement of the *Freethinker*—we believe with

good results. We are prepared to follow up the same line of propaganda, and if our friends in various parts of the country will inform us which of their local newspapers is in their opinion suitable for such advertisements, we will see to the rest. Those who care to help in this way will add to our obligation if they will at the same time forward scale of charges. One day, when our resources permit, we hope to conduct a systematic advertising campaign. We know it is needed, and we are sure good results would follow.

We have received the Annual Report and Balance-sheet of the Leicester Secular Society, and at the end of the War it is gratifying to read the statement that its "activities, finance, and membership" are in "a very healthy condition." Its membership is to-day stronger than when the War commenced; and while the Society contributed nearly fifty per cent. of its members to the Army and Navy, four of its members have suffered imprisonment as Conscientious Objectors. As should be the case, the Society is catholic in its sympathies and activities; and from what we know of the members of the Leicester Secular Society, we can safely say that these will each have gone their several ways with the fullest respect for each other's opinions and sense of duty. The Annual Report makes an earnest appeal for increased support, and we hope it will get it.

Religion and Life.

BY DR. E. LYTTELTON.

SIR,—I will now use the prerogative of journalism, and jump to a topic only remotely connected with the last. My letter which appeared on December 20 laid stress on the fact that in discussion—as in ordinary thinking—we are all prone to overleap the boundary of reason and scientific inferences, such as may be verified by the evidence of the senses, and appeal to considerations drawn from the unseen world of things spiritual; and that some of us do this unconsciously, while actually demanding that all arguments should be drawn from the region verifiable by the senses. Many serious-minded inquirers (not only believers) into the claims of Jesus Christ have done this. I mean that they have started by professing to give heed only to arguments which have to do with this present life and with such topics as the bettering of this present world by insisting on standards of conduct which are generally accepted by sensible folk. But they have, one and all, agreed on a rough estimate of the character of Christ which is based on extra or rather supra-mundane considerations which cannot be justified, or even made intelligible, to ordinary common sense. Let me illustrate this.

The outstanding fact about the Jesus of history is that his moral character attracts a large proportion of men and women of all races under heaven. So far as I know, it is the only thing that does. The Bushmen of Africa are astonishingly unlike the Mandarins of China, or the Laps, or the cotton weavers of Blackburn; in fact, they have sympathies and antipathies peculiarly their own. Nevertheless experts in persuading Bushmen, and others enormously remote from us Britons in their interpretation of life, bring the character of Christ to their attention with the utmost confidence that it will win acceptance: and it always does; from a minority a very passionate acceptance; but from the large majority a kind of reverent recognition which, though it leads to no noticeable change of life, is yet a very striking fact, considering the conditions.

For the conditions are certainly such as would lead us to expect an opposite result. Consider this point. The wonderful fact about the teaching and example of Christ is that it *all* tends towards an utterly complete detachment from the world, and from worldly allurements of

all kinds: not only wealth and pleasure, but the praise of men; honour, distinctions, and so forth. By way of compensation from this almost immeasurable sacrifice, He held an ideal of life before men's minds which was entirely bound up with a close personal relation to God: which He lived and died for, and habitually spoke of as not only sufficient as a substitute for a worldly ideal, but as something so unspeakably uplifting and powerful and radiant with joy, that it could transform any of life's conditions, however squalid and pitiable and hopeless, into stepping-stones to blessedness and peace. But so far was He from depicting the true life as enticing or gratifying in the ordinary sense, that He described the following of Him as taking up a cross: a figure borrowed from the most ghastly and degraded abyss of ruin into which any human being could possibly fall. Why? Because He meant that there was no form of suffering which could not be turned into joy if His one grand principle of living was taken as the foundation of life for His followers. What was that? Let us take His answer to the question wistfully asked by millions of our fellow-countrymen to-day: "Which is the first and great commandment?" a Palestinian way of wording the modern query, "How can I live as I ought to live, a life worthy of a human being?" Christ's answer was: "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with *all* thy heart, mind, and soul." That was the first grand demand: the aim to be set before every man, woman, and child without any exception as the secret and crown of a good life. And without any doubt he manifested in Himself a life and character based on this intensely close *personal* relation to God. He claimed that He was one with God: a claim which made the Jews do the logical, sensible thing; to take up stones to kill Him for blasphemy. For using such words about Himself, Jesus certainly demanded either to be stoned or adored, according as His hearers *reasoned* about them; that is, judged of them according to man's natural faculty of inferring from things of sense something of the nature of a law: or by using a faculty called faith, which had been often used before with real profit, in a particular way; namely, to assume that some principle drawn from beyond the natural horizon of our minds is true, then to verify it to our natural reason by acting on it, or making it part of our experience.

Now, sir, to us Christians, a reputable Atheist is a man who professes to be guiding his life by principles drawn from a small circle of experience roughly called materialistic, or natural, but is quite unable to do so. He is perpetually acting and talking on assumptions drawn from a vastly wider area into which his reason has no right of entry, though it can judge of the assumptions after they have been verified, but not before.

This characteristic of the Atheist-mind is shared by a vast number of believers, especially when it comes to estimating the character of Christ. Indeed, we are all tarred with the same brush, in that we make use of faith in a childishly irrational way: that is, we assume certain things and verify them, and then *quite arbitrarily* draw the line and decry the light which, up to that point, has been really illuminating.

But not only in estimating Christ's character, but in hearty and spontaneous admiration of anything Christ-like in our fellow-men, especially of what we call self-sacrifice. Now, self-sacrifice means a rising above all considerations, motives, and hopes which can be described as earthly or worldly, and acting on a principle which cannot—any how *a priori*—be justified or even understood if there is no unseen world—no God. Christians have their explanation of the general recognition, *e.g.*, of our Tommies' behaviour in the Trenches in the 1914 winter. The Atheist's explanation is, what? Is it not

that certain natural "social forces"—that is, motives drawn from this present life and man's natural desires—impel us first to self-sacrifice then to admiration of it? But can you be sure that this is not nonsense? The very essence of self-sacrifice is the surrendering of all our natural desires in favour of *supernatural* desires, or those which refer to hopes and aims manifestly above the worldly level.

Now, our explanation of the matter is that the Being who created us planted us in this fair but deceptive world, equipped with a mysterious instinct for rising above the world, and contradicting—the more thoroughly the better—our natural appetites for the sake of some desire we call spiritual. Further, that in order to show how this can be perfectly done He "came down" from His higher state of Being into the squalor and struggle of this life of ours and joyfully endured its utmost agony. That implanted instinct is an organ for recognizing the greatness and glory of the self-sacrifice of Christ. It is a gift from God: an element from the higher order of Being introduced among us, and working in spite of the strength of our natural appetites, in spite of our love of strife, and our slavish thirst for money, towards a nobler form of existence.

To us this explanation is the only one that redeems life from being a jumble, a tangle, a nonsensical tomfoolery. What alternative is there to explain this universal admiration for a life which transcended every worldly maxim, and manifested all that the mass of mankind dreads and flees from, as blessings? Is it not difficult to ascribe to common sense that which sets common sense at naught?

The Blessings of Peacemaking.

Text: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."—Matt. v. 9.

MY DEAR BRETHREN—

A peacemaker is one who makes peace between those who quarrel, and the promise of our blessed Lord is that all such persons shall be called the children of God.

This great promise must, of course, apply only to those who accept the atoning sacrifice of our Saviour by faith, for by the science of theology we know that they only are, or can be, the children of God. With this qualification the meaning of our text is quite clear. It is meant to be an encouragement to the children of God to be peaceful themselves, and to try to bring about the reign of peace in the world.

It may as well be admitted at once that the ruling classes in the kingdom of God on earth were not contemplated by our blessed Lord when addressing the multitude, for they are not, and from the very nature of the case cannot be, peacemakers. War is a necessity of civilization, for great nations are and can only be built up and maintained by war. The nation which did not prepare for and practice war would soon disappear from the family of great nations. If Christian nations did not protect themselves by armies and navies the heathen nations would speedily overcome them and put Buddhism or worse forms of heathenism in the place of Christianity, and it is inconceivable that God, who calls himself the God of war, could mean that his own religion should be thus overthrown.

How could Christianity have secured and maintained its supremacy without the fighting qualities and superior weapons of Christian people? True, God is all-powerful, but he is only powerful in this world through the agency of his people. He gives us intelligence, and thus enables us to devise ways and means of carrying

out his designs, and to accomplish his will we must use all the faculties and powers that he placed at our disposal. The history of the Christian Church abundantly proves that without fire and sword she never could have achieved the proud position she now holds.

Infidels are prone to point to the bloody pages of the Church's history and reproach us for them, but any rational person must understand that the soul is of vastly greater importance than the body, and that if the bloody religious battles of the past had not been fought these very infidels themselves would not now be basking in the sunlight of Christianity and enjoying all the great blessings of our splendid Christian civilization.

The ancient kingdom of Israel, out of which our Church has grown, was established by war, every battle of which was planned and carried into execution by God himself, who personally directed the movements of the troops. And although the record of the Church's progress has not been given to us directly by inspiration from on high, it is equally plain that from the establishment of the Church in the Roman Empire until the present day the wars that have been necessary to achieve her supremacy have also been personally superintended by the Almighty. The greatest soldiers the world ever saw were and are Christians, and while we unite in glorifying our great Christian generals, and while it is the custom of Christian nations to go into war with prayers to God for success, and thanksgiving to God when victory sits on their banners, it would be absurd and ungrateful for us to pretend that war is contrary to the will of God.

The Moors were driven out of Spain by Christian soldiers, the ascendancy of Roman Catholicism in England was prevented by Protestant troops; slavery in America was overthrown by war, and it is impossible to explain how all the successes for the true religion could have been achieved without war. How ridiculous, then, it would be for us to say that war is not part of God's plan for the building up of his kingdom on earth. True, all these wars are in direct contradiction to the teachings of our blessed Lord, especially in the passage before us, but this contradiction can easily be explained by supposing that the Beatitudes are meant for one set of God's children—the lower classes—while the facts and experiences of life are meant for another set—the upper classes—to which I and you, my brethren, belong.

Every thinking man knows that the teaching of Holy Writ is flatly contradictory in many important particulars. These contradictions, however, are not evidences of the unreliability of the Bible as a divinely inspired guide to life, nay, rather are they evidences of the wisdom of God who gives one rule of life for one set of his children who are able to understand and profit by it, and another rule for that other set who are unintelligent and wholly unable to feed on the strong meat of the doctrine meant for his more favoured children.

Manifestly, it would not do for us to teach our tender-minded children that in their play with other children they should accomplish their desires by blows, for they are not sufficiently developed to receive such doctrine. Later in life they come to understand how necessary it is to fight their way through life, and how inevitably they would be overcome by aggressive competitors if they did not. And, by parity of reasoning, God does not teach the poor and ignorant of this world to fight, for if he did they would become unruly and form themselves into mobs for the destruction of life and property, not understanding the true art of war and how to conduct it in a manner pleasing to God. To these poor and ignorant ones God counsels peace; that is, he counsels them not to take upon themselves the organization of war on their

own hook and for their own direct benefit. Of course it is right and wise for the poor and ignorant to fight when called on by their wise rulers, and for the purpose of maintaining the matchless arrangements of our Christian civilization. That is a very different thing from their becoming fighters in their own way, and for purposes which under their direction would be destructive of the orderly movements of society. Now, my brethren, observe the value of this doctrine to those who are so justly and properly in privileged and advantageous positions in this world. Take an illustration that is very much to the point to-day. The miners in South Wales are threatening to strike for better conditions of life which, it must be confessed, are not such as I or you, my brethren, would care to undergo. But these miners are horny-handed sons of toil, and, therefore, fit for little else but to dig in the mines in order to bring forth the coal that a loving Heavenly Father has so bountifully provided for us. In thus digging they are honourably fulfilling the part God meant them to perform in the economy of the world.

In the event of such a strike, the military may be called out to keep order, as happened at Featherstone some years ago; and plainly it would not do in such a case to read the Beatitude now under consideration to the regularly constituted soldiery. It is their duty in the eyes of God and man to make war in dead earnest, if necessary, in the interests of peace and property. It would be ridiculous to go to the soldiers at the moment when their rifles were aimed at the rebellious miners and tell them that peacemakers are the special children of God, and that therefore they should not fire on their fellow-men. If they could be made to believe this, they would be unfit to do the work they are there to do, and the rebellious miners would have their way against the divinely appointed rulers of society. If they are discontented with their lot, the miners certainly have a right to strike, but not to make any disturbance; for in a great and glorious empire like this there are always plenty of opportunities for any honest and industrious person to make a comfortable living.

This passage of Scripture was clearly not meant to apply to soldiers and policemen, who are in the employ of the Government, and so under the supervision of God. But notice how very applicable it is to rebellious miners. It would be quite proper to read it to them, and make them understand how blessed it is for the working classes to remain peaceable at all times, no matter how unpleasant for them may be the arrangements of society. It is therefore the duty of every minister of the true Gospel, and of every Roman Catholic priest, to sink their doctrinal differences, and try to impress on the working classes that they should at all times be peaceable and quiet under the beneficent orders of their superiors; for is it not written that "godliness with contentment is great gain"?

Observe how our gallant boys in khaki have gone forth to battle with their guns loaded, so to speak, with our pious prayers, and their banners consecrated with thanksgiving to the God of Battles. And observe, too, how docile the lower classes have been. Under our careful training, inspiring them with proper reverence for the constituted authorities, they have been like sheep under the dominion of a good shepherd. It is true that certain non-churchgoing workers were somewhat refractory; such persons as the misguided Conscientious Objectors and Socialists, some of whom are abandoned Atheists. But in proportion as the populace are brought thoroughly under the benign influence of the clergy, they are tractable and submissive. If the vast multitude of the poor should rebel against the authorities, they would be irresistible, because the soldiers and police

are drawn from among them, and might at any time make common cause with them. Yet they remain quiet in their modest but honourable sphere, in spite of the hard condition of their lives, understanding from us that the object most to be desired is the eternal crown and joy that awaits them in a fairer and better world than this poor vale of tears. It would, indeed, be surprising that these people are so docile did we not understand the power of the Holy Spirit in the human heart, for otherwise they would hardly be willing to wait till the next world for those rewards which come to us so freely in this.

This docility of the common people is a most striking illustration of the power of God. To the carnal mind it is so absurd for them to submit to being worked and driven like dumb cattle that but for spiritual insight it would be impossible to account for it. But to that spiritual eye all is clear and plain. "God moves in a mysterious way, his wonders to perform," and we should be thankful that he moves so powerfully right against the natural bent of the human mind, for otherwise the present splendid arrangement of society would soon fall about our ears, and we should be submitted to a reign of equality, under which wholesome pride and stimulating ambition would be no more; under which capital would fly to happier lands, and the glorious characteristics of our truly wonderful empire would give place to a dreary dead level of mediocrity; under which the Church would cease to occupy the proud position she so ably and benignly holds to-day.

CATER TOTHERICH, D.D.,

Chaplain to the Forces.

Correspondence.

ATROCITIES AND THE CHURCH.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—On Sunday evening, December 29 last, the Rev. G. Barber, at the Congregational Church, Lewisham High Road, gave, during his discourse, a story of an English nurse having her tongue split by the Germans. I hold no brief for the Germans, but cannot credit this particular atrocity.

I am told to-day that this story appears in *Reynolds' Newspaper* of January 5, in the "Secret History" column, in all its details, as told by the reverend gentleman.

Now, did it really happen, and did the preacher and *Reynolds'* reporter both occupy seats in the same car; and have the War Office any record of this mutilation? Or, is the reverend gentleman romancing, and a member of his congregation pulling his leg?

J. W.

[We have no means of knowing whether this particular story is true or not. Judging from other and similar stories, we should regard it with suspicion until it received full and official corroboration.—ED.]

"SOUL-SALVING."

SIR,—In your issue for December 29 I note a criticism of "Keridon's" recent articles on "Salving the Soul," by "H.V.T." (in whose initials, I think, I recognize an old friend and fellow-townsmen of mine), which interests me, because it brings out in clear relief the *danger* of employing terms belonging to *one* branch of scientific research to describe the processes or phenomena belonging to another, and *different*, branch. You cannot adequately explain biological or psychological phenomena in terms of physics; or say, geological phenomena in terms of chemistry; each great department of evolutionary science has its own *peculiar* phenomena explainable *only* in its own terminology, viz., psychological processes can be described in terms of psychology, and so on. I fear the introduction of terms like "Force" and "Energy," borrowed as they are from physics and decked out, as is usually the case, in capital letters, serve only to *confuse* thought rather than clarify it.

I am writing, of course, far removed from my books, but I think Prof. Karl Pearson, in his *Grammar of Science* and G. H. Lewes in his *Problems of Life and Mind*, have, both of them, pointed out the danger and inapplicability of either of these terms for *general* use. Unfortunately, the habit of speaking of "Force" and "Energy" as though these were *entities* is only too common, and serves to make "confusion worse confounded." Even men of higher cultural levels are guilty of this lapse. I remember a quite remarkable case—remarkable for such a usually clear thinker—in Dr. Soddy's splendid book on *Matter and Energy* in the "Home University Series," and I think that Herbert Spencer himself sinned occasionally in this direction. All this should serve to prove the *necessity* of *strictly* scrutinizing one's terms when discussing abstruse subjects.

R.E., France.

B. G. BROWN.

Obituary.

It is with profound regret that we have to report the death, on January 6, of Mr. Robert Clough in his seventieth year. Mr. Clough had been connected with this School all his life, having, at times, filled most of the offices, and was, up to his death, a *life committeeman*, besides being Chairman of the Trustees. His honest, firm, and courteous disposition won him high regard in all circles in which he moved, and his loss will be keenly felt in connection with the School for which he had laboured so long and consistently. He was a constant reader of the *Freethinker*, dying steadfast and true to the principles of Secularism and Humanity. Mr. Henry Taylor delivered the Secular Burial Service, paying special tribute to the high character and loving nature of our departed friend.—J. SMITH, Secretary, Failsworth Secular School.

The Glasgow Branch has met with a serious loss through the death of one of its oldest and most-respected members, Mr. Learmont, who was laid to rest on Saturday, January 11, after a short illness. The news of his death caused a feeling of regret amongst the members. Mr. Learmont was present at Mr. Cohen's lecture on December 22 apparently in his usual health. He was a man of uncommon common sense, who, on every occasion possible, dropped the word in season on behalf of Freethought. The cause can ill afford to lose men of the moral calibre of Mr. Learmont.—F. LONSDALE, Secretary.

National Secular Society.

REPORT OF MONTHLY EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 9.

The President, Mr. C. Cohen, occupied the chair. Also present: Messrs. Baker, Braddock, Brandes, Davidson, Eager, Gorniot, Kelf, Neary, Neate, Palmer, Quinton, Roger, Samuels, Spence, Wood; Miss Pankhurst, Miss Pitcher, Mrs. Rolf, Miss Kough, and the Secretary.

The minutes of the previous meeting read and, after discussion, confirmed.

On its being reported that the Liverpool Branch had elected Miss Pankhurst (West Ham Branch) to act as their delegate on the Executive, a discussion arose as to whether the delegate was elected under the old or the new constitution. The President's ruling was criticized, and, upon his refusing to accept a resolution as being out of order, six of the eight persons who disagreed with him (Messrs. Brandes, Davidson, Gorniot, Roger, Samuel, and Wood) withdrew from the meeting.

Monthly financial statement presented and adopted.

The receipt of a grant of £40 from the Secular Society, Ltd., was reported.

Applications for the formation of new Branches at Belfast and Ogmores Vale were granted.

New members were admitted for Belfast, Birmingham, Falkirk, Glasgow, Manchester, North London, Ogmores, Rhondda, and the Parent Society, making a total of 62.

A suggestion from South London Branch that a directory of the Secretaries of all Branches be compiled for the use of Branches was accepted, and a list ordered to be prepared.

A resolution was received from the Newcastle Branch criticizing the action of the President at the October Executive meeting. The President felt that the Newcastle Branch had been misled by *ex parte* reports, and expressed his willingness to meet the Branch when visiting the North in February. The President's suggestion was endorsed.

The Executive learned with regret of the death of Mrs. Arthur B. Moss, and a vote of condolence and sympathy with Mr. Arthur B. Moss and his family was passed unanimously.

Other minor matters of business were transacted, and the meeting adjourned.

E. M. VANCE, *General Secretary*.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

Notices of Lectures, etc., must reach us by first post on Tuesday and be marked "Lecture Notice" if not sent on postcard.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

METROPOLITAN SECULAR SOCIETY (Johnson's Dancing Academy, 241 Marylebone Road, W., near Edgware Road): 8, Mr. W. H. Smith, "Christianity Weighed in the Balance."

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (St. Pancras Reform Club, 15 Victoria Road, N.W., off Kentish Town Road): 7.30, Percy Muir, "Internationalism." Open Debate.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N. S. S. (Trade Union Hall, 30 Brixton Road, near Kennington Oval Tube Station): 7.30, E. Burke, "Christianity and Reconstruction."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (South Place, Moorgate Street, E.C.): 11, Joseph McCabe, "Mr. Wells on Education."

OUTDOOR.

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

COUNTRY.

INDOOR.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N. S. S. (Repertory Theatre, Station Street): 7, Mr. Chapman Cohen, "Freethought, Religion, and Death."

GLASGOW BRANCH N. S. S. (The Good Templar's Hall, 122 Ingram Street): 12 noon, Old and New Members cordially invited.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Joseph McCabe, "Secularism, and the League of Nations."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N. S. S. (Baker's Hall, 56 Swan Street): 6.30, Mr. St. Rhone, "How to Improve the Relation of the Sexes."

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE BRANCH N. S. S. (12A Clayton Street East): 3, Members' Meeting, Yearly Financial Statement, and other Important Business.

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