

Here is one who says that in such markets as South America, we shall profit by Germany's misfortunes. Fool! was I talking of England's gain in commerce over the Continent? And what amount of wealth, I should like to know, is the price of one broken heart? (In any case, and on your own ground, what we gain from Germany, we lose—and more—to the States, and no gain of that sort would compensate us for the awful wreckage of our world's finance.) No—I mean the real gain of man.

Then come answers with more in them—that this war, being the last straw, will cause the peoples to rise; and that, with a bloody revolution, if necessary, they will sweep away the tyrants, and establish peaceful socialistic communities, managed by an educated democracy. I cannot think that this will be so, as yet. Bloody war or revolution has never brought peaceful freedom in its train. Hopes of such things are farther from realisation now than they were before. I reject this answer. God would not have recourse to so clumsy and contradictory a method of giving us peace.

It is said that this war is caused by our autocratic diplomacy; but God needs not to plunge the world in blood and tears, because its political machinery is rather stupid and out of date. (My God is a reasonable God.) These things are superficial; they may be the occasion—they are not the cause of the war.

They say too, that the war is useful in demonstrating to man the real unity of mankind (if only financially); and the need for effective government by man, so that his deeds follow, instead of thwart, his intentions. He who says that this war is to demonstrate everything, I do not reject, for his answer is included in mine.

Good for man, and enough to pay for all, will come thus. Starvation, torture, and death will be rampant in Europe, but worse than any physical agonies will be the torture of human hearts and souls. (Have you seen a woman crying yet, in these days?)

But now the crowning grace.

In these conditions (and apparently only in these conditions), the human soul, thrown back upon itself, turns to two things: first, to thought—deep, searching thought, and, ultimately, to prayer. When man acknowledges himself beaten, he can but turn to

God, and this is what it is for. Yes, that is all. I had no great secret after all.

Would no man stop to ask himself the meaning of his life? Now he must (and he is led by the Jester, Punch). Would no man really acknowledge his God? Now or soon—what else will be left?

There it is, so simple, so obvious, and yet so vitally urgent. This European civilisation, which in a few months may be in the throes of its death struggle, has men of mighty intellect—but they are materialists, and their thoughts dwell on superficialities. They are essentially atheistic; they do not believe in God. For man acts on his beliefs (if they be real), and one need not to have lived long in England or elsewhere in Europe, to realise that belief in God plays an almost negligible part in man's life nowadays. Some ignorant peasants still believe in God; of course they know no better. But we with our blood and iron, our sensuous indulgences, and our greed of gold, have passed all that. With man's natural leaders engulfed in materialism, the light of spirituality on Earth was growing dim, and so—

"So this is a divine punishment for atheism?"

The idea of punishment is utterly wrong. (If you choose, you may think of it, in one aspect, as a retributory or repurcussive action set in operation by some occult natural law.) God never punishes, unless you say you are punished for putting your finger in the fire, by getting it burnt.

It would seem that it is highly dangerous for man to try and live without God; and so He in His wisdom is giving us a lesson—not to serve us right, but to ensure that we shall not try it again. Let this lesson suffice, then.

Without wanting war, we are all at war. Desirous of preserving and perfecting our civilisation, we are straining our utmost to destroy it. We have failed in our self-imposed task of ruling this planet—without God. Let us own up—we were stupidly complacent, ignorantly self-sufficient. Let us get this new and really solid foundation, and start again. God's purpose will succeed; but we have power to modify the working of His will on Earth. On us, then, rests a responsibility. We must co-operate, and use our wills

with God's, and drive home this point. To make men think, and to make them turn to God (for their own sakes), for this has God allowed the war. The war is the lesser of two evils, and by it God strives to shield us from the greater. The greater is the victory of materialism over man's soul, and the extinction of the spiritual light.

Let us not rebel, but learn our lesson thoroughly and at once (lest a worse repetition of it be necessary).

We are late enough now—let us wait no longer.

FILM CENSORSHIP CONFERENCE.

At the invitation of the N.Z. Catholic Federation, a very representative conference met in Wellington. Five Education Boards sent delegates, and four other Boards were in sympathy, but unable to send delegates. Six Educational Institutes were represented, and three more were in sympathy. 25 local bodies sent representatives, and 24 others expressed sympathy; while ten societies interested in moral reform sent delegates.

Councillor Frost, representing the Mayor of Wellington, presided. The following was carried unanimously:—"That this Conference of Local Government Bodies, Educational Authorities, and Organisations concerned with the social welfare of the people of this Dominion, whilst fully appreciating the useful and educational value of the cinematograph, is of opinion that the class of moving pictures at present exhibited in New Zealand constitutes a grave danger to the moral health and social welfare of the community, and affirms the necessity for a strict supervision, by the Government, of all films exhibited to the public in the picture theatres of this Dominion, and requests that an officer or board be appointed, whose duty it shall be to inspect all films before they are allowed to be exhibited, and that every film so licensed shall bear a certificate signed to that effect; and further, that a list of all films declared to be unsuitable be published weekly in the Police Gazette, and that a copy of this resolution be transmitted to the Minister for Internal Affairs, with a request that legislation be introduced to give effect to the same at the earliest possible opportunity."