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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions

The Bible and the Clergy

IN last week's issue we quoted from a letter by one of our readers as to the effectiveness of Paine's *Age of Reason*. That opinion with its implications and the light it throws on the present position of Christianity in this country is worthy of further consideration. Of the effectiveness of Paine's best known work there can be no question. Not many books—apart from the subsidized editions of the Bible—have been so widely circulated; and for every copy sold there must have been at least one extra reader. Moreover this wide circulation was (in the earlier period covered by the book) achieved in the face of the opposition of the law and the power of the Christian Church. Men gathered to read it surreptitiously. At one time to have it in one's possession was a danger and, in many of the cases tried between 1795 and 1815, merely to have commended the reading of Paine's works was to ensure a conviction.

Paine himself was a knight-errant of humanity. In his various works he touched on all the main problems of the social life of his time. For a survey of fundamental social problems he was matched by few of his contemporaries. In the new world he saved the cause of the Americans when it was nearly lost. In France his hand is clear in the drawing up of the revolutionary Rights of Man. In his homeland he provided a programme for reformers for many years, and his dream of a United States of Europe, had it been realized, would have put an end to European wars. His *Age of Reason* came at a particularly opportune moment. A science of anthropology, which, rightly apprehended, sounds the death-note of all religion, had yet to be born; but for more than a hundred years before Paine's biblical criticism had been developing, books drawing deadly parallels between Christianity and other religions were paving the way for a more scientific study of Christian origins, and above all a new race of humans—the “People”—had come into

existence with the French Revolution. The time was ripe for such a work, and the work came.

For general propaganda Paine possessed a style that marked a new era in the writing of English. It was forthright, with a simplicity of language that charmed those with taste and was crystal-clear to the ordinary reader. This, indeed, was one of Paine's chief offences, and it is a feature that counts against the heretic to-day. Scholarly criticism of the Bible leaves the average man or woman untouched. He or she fumbles at both their meaning and their application. A reader must give something to the writer as the writer gives to the reader. The service here is mutual. Paine wrote for the people in the widest sense of the word. And this was his great crime. His writings on social and political subjects, and the influence they had on his contemporaries should alone have secured him immortality. But he attacked the Christian fetish book, and he did this not in expensive volumes and in the stereotyped language that shut them off from the people, but in a manner that made his reading as clear as sunlight on a bright frosty day. The name of Paine became to the religious mind a synonym for something unutterably hateful and completely dangerous. Historians have ignored him in their writings or passed him by with a depreciatory reference. But, in a way the ferocity of hatred served to defeat itself. It is hardly likely that in a more liberal medium *The Age of Reason* would have sustained its popularity for nearly five generations as it has done. Christians would have forgotten it, and non-Christians might have found a substitute. But the enemies of Paine did almost as much as his friends to perpetuate his name. The devil has always been as well-known a personage as God Almighty, and has figured more prominently in certain classes of religious literature. And with Paine what might have died out with freedom was given immortality by bigotry and tyranny. Paine's name was known to thousands who had never read a line of his writings. Many were led, in virtue of the attraction that a declared vice usually has for the godly, to read the *Age of Reason*. One might indeed say of Paine that while loved by his friends he was immortalized by his enemies.

* * *

Paine and the Bible

The writer of the letter which sent me off on this theme said that he believed *The Age of Reason* might outlive the Bible. In a sense that has actually happened. What was the Bible that Paine so successfully attacked? It was the Bible of the established religion, the Bible that had existed, for Christians, throughout the ages. It was the book that was directly inspired by God; every chapter, every word, every letter. And while there had existed for several centuries the division marked by the Protestant and Catholic versions, neither Church questioned the

divine origin of the "sacred" book. The only qualification offered in this matter was that of the Roman Church—which claimed to have alone the authoritative explanation of what the Bible meant. But in Paine's time the Bible was still for believers the veritable word of God. It gave us the truth about the origin of the world and man, the beginnings of language, a code of morals that was final and unquestionable. It contained also the only authentic account of God's dealing with man, and the only method of eternal salvation. Through one Church or the other the Bible was the superior authority to which all must appeal. It controlled philosophy and dictated to science.

What, now, has become of that Bible? Who regards the Bible as any authority on science? Instead of that being the case it is religious leaders who cater for the approval of scientific men with all the assiduity of a house-to-house street hawker, and advertise the fact that this or that scientist believes in the Bible as joyously as the quack medicine vendor announces his purchased testimonials. What historian goes to the Bible for the early history of mankind, what linguist for an account of the origin of languages? Who believes that a man deserves to be stoned to death for breaking the sabbath, or that disease is brought about by demons, or that plagues are sent by God to punish man for his sins? Even the major miracles of the Christian faith—the virgin birth, the resurrection of Jesus from the dead, etc.—are now openly questioned by large numbers of the Christian clergy.

So far as the Christian religion is concerned the essential Bible against which Paine wrote is for educated men and women as dead as the Dodo. It has its value for the account it gives of primitive customs and superstitious beliefs. It can be read with the interest that one reads an account of the beliefs of the ancient inhabitants of South America or ancient Egypt or the Australian aborigines. Sir James Fraser has written three bulky volumes dealing with the folk-lore of the Bible and its parallels to existing primitive religions. These books point the way in which the Bible should be read. To approach the Bible in any other way is to leave oneself as ignorant of the Bible after reading as one was before. All the writings as to the age of the Bible, the dates of Bible manuscripts, are interesting enough as studies of history, or of archaeology, but they have no bearing whatever on the religious truth of the Bible. Much of this literary and antiquarian research is indeed one of the methods by which the Churches continue to fool the people. It does not matter at what date certain parts of the Bible appeared in history, it matters not the value of a brass button whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or Matthew, Mark, Luke and John wrote the four gospels, whether someone called Jesus lived or not, or even whether some number of people believed him to be God. A belief is not more credible because it is old, and the testimony of a man in 1660 to the existence of witches is of no greater value than if the evidence was given by an inhabitant of Lancashire in 1940. The proper way to read the Bible is to have at hand a compendium of religious beliefs and practices of primitive peoples living and dead. Then one will realize that the spiritual brethren of the miracle-working Jesus of the New Testament is the medicine-man of an African tribe, that magic is magic whether it is written about as "Ju-Ju" or the "spirit of God." The Bible that Christian scholars of to-day are defending is not the Bible of Paine's day. It no longer means what it then meant; it no longer has the authority it had then; the "inspiration" of the Bible no longer means what it once meant; and when a book loses its original meaning, for all logical and practical purposes, that book has ceased to exist.

Falsehood in the Pulpit

The clergy are, as usual, playing a double game. I remember when a young man listening to a lecture by Canon (or Dean, I forget which he was at the time) Farrar on the relation of religion and science. Farrar was then a thorn in the side of the orthodox clergy, although his heresies would sound very mild to-day. The address was considered daring in those days, but would be rather commonplace at present. When the question time came I asked the speaker whether he would dare to say in his pulpit at St. Margaret's, Westminster, what he had said during his address, in which he had thrown overboard the science and philosophy of the Bible and castigated the Church for its historic attitude towards science. Before he could reply the chairman interposed and began to handle my question. I quietly remarked that I had no objection to the chairman replying, but it implied that the Dean could not be trusted to do so. The chairman sat down and Farrar replied that he would not be ashamed to repeat anything he had just said in St. Margaret's. I retorted that I did not say he would be *ashamed* to say in St. Margaret's what he had just said, but had asked would he *dare* to do so. No reply was given.

This early experience of mine raises the point towards which I am driving. In open controversy, in books written for the more enlightened, it is admitted that the conception of the Bible upon which the Christian Church was built is no longer tenable. It is admitted that the various books are of unknown or uncertain authorship, that these represent the religious beliefs of a bygone age, and the direct challenge of critical anthropology that the Bible falls generally into line with the religious beliefs of existing primitive peoples is not met. In one work issued a few years back, edited by a leading churchman, it is admitted that the Bible follows broadly the more ancient Babylonian cosmogony, that the literal inspiration (religiously there can be no other) can be maintained only by ignoring the established facts of science and history, that the fall of man, the universal deluge, the sabbath, belong to a culture of pre-Christian antiquity, and so forth, and to the wide-awake public the Bible is commended on the grounds of its literary quality (which it owes to its English rendering), the influence it has had over people, etc., etc.

So far as the section of the public outside the Church, while not yet having given up Christian doctrines, are impressed by the impact of modern thought on Christian belief, and exhibit an uneasiness as to whether the Christian Church can justify its claims, they are met with concessions. But take the liberal—or pretendedly liberal—clergymen *inside* the Church, speaking to a public where the situation dulls critical examination of what is said, and contradiction is impossible. There the situation is entirely different. There the preacher is satisfied with amiable ethical generalities that offer just as much real guidance to the people in the conduct of affairs as might a tonal repetition of the multiplication table. In support of their vapid moral discourses the Bible stories are cited as though they were historical occurrences that had never been questioned by anyone.

There are numerous examples of this that might be given, but I take a recent one by the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead, written for the *News-Chronicle* as a Christmas article. There is the picture of the mythical birth of Jesus, with the shepherds following the remarkable star that led them to where Jesus was born, and then remained stationary over the stable. The conditions in which Joseph was unable to get a room in the Inn, the thoughts of Mary—as though they were afterwards given to a newspaper reporter—Mary's feelings on the birth of the child, and so forth,

all with a precision that leaves nothing to be desired. And, in this, it must be noted that Mr. Weatherhead is following the example of other preachers. All of them, in the pulpit, speak of what God said, what "Our Lord" did to this man or this woman, in what circumstances God tempted Job, or Jesus drove the devils out of the epileptic, what God told Moses to do, and so forth. It illustrates the high-water mark of double dealing. To the informed and critical mind the Bible is admitted to be little more than a book of folk-lore with ethical common-places that are common in either fact or teaching to almost all stages of human society. Thus the critical are disarmed. To the faithful believers the Bible is treated as though we were in the early sixteenth century instead of the middle twentieth. The foolish are not disturbed in their foolishness; the critical are met more than half-way. In the place where the parson, were he intellectually honest, should correct the mistaken beliefs of Christians concerning the Bible, he is silent. In public where he should defend his creed, he hopes to placate the enemy by professing a liberalism that is fatal to the claims of the Church to which he belongs.

I think then it may be taken as a sober truth that Paine's *Age of Reason* will outlive the Christian Bible. It has done more than any other single book to weaken its standing. And it still does its work as hardly any other book can do with those Christians who are genuine bibliolators, and who are not easily to be touched by more scholarly attacks on their creed. What Paine said in 1792 the liberal clergy are preaching in 1940. They do not, of course, tell the truth as Paine told it. They tell part of the truth and then try to prevent its deeper recognition by draping it with a lie. They admit the truth so far as they must, and where they must. But where they can, with children, with the ill-informed, they return to their old doctrines. It is in the pulpits where the truth about the Bible should be told by clergymen. But a clergyman who spoke the whole truth in the pulpit would be a single sermon preacher. Those above him would take care that he never preached again.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Light in the Blackout

(A Haskinsesque effort, with apologies to all who need them)

I SAID to the man who stood at the Gate of the Local,
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied, "You, also, cannot get a battery for your torch?" and he pressed a box of Brymay in my hand.

I repeated my request for a light and he replied,
"Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the Hand of Neville Chamberlain.

That shall be to you better than light, and safer than Attlee's, Sinclair's, or Gallacher's way."

So I went forth,

And finding (not too easily) the Hand of Chamberlain trod gladly into the Right.

And he led me up the garden and to the breaking of treaties and heads in the Near and Far East.

So heart be still;

What need our little life, our human life to know (ours not to reason why; ours but to do and die), if Neville hath comprehension?

In all the busy strife of this cockeyed war, in the air and the mind's sea, Neville hideth his intention. Neville knows. His will is best.

The stretch of years which winds ahead, so dim owing to the mental Blackout and the Censorship, Are clear to Neville. Our fears are premature; in Neville (and his friend Adolf) all time hath fool provision.

B. S.

Mars and the Ministry

Wut's the use o' meetin' going
Every Sabbath, wet or dry,
Ef it's right to go amowin'
Feller-men like oats an' rye.

Lowell

THE present war has disturbed all the Christian Churches. Anyone who has heard, or read, the plaintive utterances of the clergy of all denominations, and their apologists, must perceive that they are one and all highly conscious of the reproach which this most terrible outbreak implies. For the past hundred years it has been the loud clerical boast that the Christian Religion had civilized, not only all Europe, but the world, and few except the Romish clergy have had the courage to claim that war is in harmony with the principles and ideals of the Christian Religion. Even so, it was reserved for the pious General Franco, and his dubious satellites, to represent the Christian warrior, without fear and without reproach, in spite of the sturdy denials of all decent people.

The Protestant clergy had been preaching peace and brotherhood since the last Armistice. This present war means that the big stick of brute force has been again thrust into the mechanism of civilization in the short course of twenty years. The wheels cease turning, and the business of the entire world is affected. Not only commerce, but philosophy, literature, science, art, music, all the precious things of life, are arrested. At one terrible stroke we are back in the times of barbarism and savagery, whilst millions of the flower of European manhood are arrayed for mutual slaughter. The pre-war conditions were the fruit of centuries of slow evolution, centuries of moral and intellectual advance; a labour not of yesterday, but very many yesteryears of European civilization. What is our civilization worth if, after centuries of progress, we must needs settle our social and political disputes as if we were bloody baboons? Humanity has been hoodwinked, and, just too late, our pastors and masters discover the awful state of affairs, and apologize politely for them. They are so very, very sorry, but they cannot even promise that it will not occur again.

Is this the outcome of the much-advertised revival of religion which the Archbishop of Canterbury and so many other priests, have so boasted of? Is it not plain that the first broad effect of the war has been to stimulate criticism of all the Christian churches, and to raise serious doubts as to the truth of religion itself? "The failure of the Churches," "the collapse of Christianity" are phrases in constant use at the present time. Surely, professed followers of an alleged "Prince of Peace" ought to have done more. They ought to have been able to prevent this war. A widespread popular sentiment harps on the degradation of Western civilization in coming to this sorry pass after so many centuries of the Christian Religion. Indeed, many echo Thomas Hardy's biting criticism:—

After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison gas.

In very truth, the complicity of the Churches with militarism itself precludes any real hope for their future. Whilst the clergy christen battleships, bless regimental flags, and act as salaried army chaplains, not a few doubt the sincerity of their pacifism. It all contradicts the Christian belief in a god of love. The problem of evil is accentuated. How can a god be good, asks the distressed Christian, when he permits such a terrible catastrophe to overtake mankind twice in a few years, and inflict untold suffering on the inno-

cent? The "Lord's Prayer" is thus called in question, and relegated to the land of dreams.

If this is all that professional Christian apologists can get from their creed, small wonder that it has failed, and failed utterly. So long as men's theological conceptions remain embedded in the Middle Ages, and earlier; so long as no new humanitarianism flames into being with a passionate sense of human brotherhood, and a new scale of human values, so men will seek lasting peace in vain. Is it not becoming clear that Christianity is losing whatever vitality it ever possessed, and the clergy are out of touch with modern life? In this nightmare of civilization their so-called message falls on unresponsive ears.

Modern war is waged on such a scale that it heaps horror on horror's head, and the imagination boggles at it. The failure of the Christian Churches is too complete to be glossed over by the glamour of false sentiment and melodramatic heroics. The priests are so immersed in their third-century dogmas that they cannot see that the Frankenstein of Militarism has usurped the seat of Reason. We, whose fathers built up in generations of suffering and toil this fair fabric of Western civilization, cannot rely on the Churches. The nations which profess to worship a "Prince of Peace" are themselves in the stronger grip of Mars, the god of war. To such a pass, after so many centuries of Christianity, has the entire Western world come. It is the paradox of paradoxes that the woeful welter of a tragic contest is going on in almost every corner of the Christian world that professes to worship a deity who commanded his followers not to kill, and to obey his teaching of non-resistance and forgiveness. The matter raises the entire question as to the real usefulness of the Christian Religion under the strenuous conditions of modern times. There is no thinkable future use for such churches. They are separated from reality, from even their own creed, by a Europe in arms. The tramp of millions of armed men mocks their statesmanship; the vast war-cemeteries proclaim their impotence. Mars resigns in the place of Reason. Was ever so much pretence so paraded to achieve so negative a result?

MIMNERMUS

Light on Life in the Convent *

MRS. SIMPSON'S story of her brief Convent experience is told simply, and apparently truthfully. Her tale lacks sensational elements, but is all the same a ghastly narrative of perfectly useless unpleasantnesses, typifying a waste of life on an enormous scale when one considers the thousands of men and women living the unnatural life of the religious prisons called monasteries, convents, nunneries, etc.

This particular work is not written by an unbeliever, nor does its author seem conscious of the logical implications of her exposure. She regards it as just the unfortunate inaptitude of an individual who wanted to be a nun but failed. "It is not any enmity to religion that speaks," says Mrs. Simpson, "but my memory of much suffering." She must leave her readers to draw far more general conclusions from her artless story. If there is any wisdom in the common ideals of Health, Intelligence and Beauty, and the pursuit of Happiness amongst mankind, then Mrs. Simpson has written a book full of arguments against every religion which encourages centres of darkness where all these things are anathema.

In the Convent referred to, were women who had

become "brides of Christ" (and His Church), and had brought with them "thousands of pounds" as "dowries" to their "Husband" Christ . . . and His Church. This Convent is properly described as a wealthy, prosperous, and self-contained establishment, including farm, orchard, and machinery. Two Priests "administered this community of nuns"—nuns who never tasted the good things their labour produced, neither fruit, eggs nor milk came their way, although they worked with strenuous exertion so that the priests first, while second (and last) outside traders could enjoy the convent harvests. The boasted "ascetic" life was not shared by the priests, but nuns and novices shared all the work, had "plenty of bad food badly cooked," but neither jam, sugar, butter nor eggs.

Tuberculosis is said by Mrs. Simpson to be "the ultimate fate of almost every one in the convent." Insanity and other diseases were also prevalent. And what can you think of a life in which FOUR MINUTES was the maximum time allowed inside the bath-room. But no time was wasted in disrobing. Even in the brief four minutes allowed for all the uses of the bath-room, no nun was allowed to be nude. Such immodesty was guarded against by solemn vows in case solitude might, in the case of really immodest young women, lead to an occasional desire to wash oneself "all-over."

Lying prostrate and kissing the bare floor-boards was part of the sacred ritual of the convent. Some nuns even performed voluntary feats of penitential discipline. It must have been most charming for a God to watch while nuns "filled their beds with dozens of half-inch copper-tacks to mortify the flesh."

Intellectual standards of convent life may be judged by the fact that for twenty years the same library had consisted of the same few paper-covered reprints for the use of about two hundred women. Mrs. Simpson suggested the formation of a debating circle—the mere mention of which "shocked them all," and of course is still unborn.

More than once Satan tempted this young novice. Once—we blush to tell the story—she and two other daring devils of girls, finding themselves alone, out of bounds, and in a solitary river-side spot, actually undressed and bathed!!! On another occasion this hungry worker, doing many hours' labour gathering apples, and making cider (both for other people), yielded to temptation to the extent of taking a single bite out of a tasty-looking apple. Her rapid repentance received a certain amount of inspiration from the fact that a superior nun DISCOVERED the crime. Mrs. Simpson threw away the uneaten apple—too late. Confession and penance followed the appalling wickedness, never to be repeated.

The Convent conventions about Art and Beauty may be inferred from the story Mrs. Simpson tells about a picture presented to the convent by a pious painter. It was a beautiful replica of a famous Italian Madonna and Infant Christ. The Infant Christ was unfortunately naked in His Mother's arms! This abominable obscenity was at once corrected by "Sister Gabriella, a painter of sorts," who "PAINTED the naked child into a dark blue bathing-suit. When the sun shone on the picture," concludes Mrs. Simpson, "it had a way of reminding us all of the indecency of nudity" (page 127).

The "Theology" of the convent seems to have fitted perfectly in with the incidents already described. Hell was taught with fundamentalist fervour. The horrible negation of life and happiness inside the convent walls was glorified as a model for mankind. "The day will come," said one of the priests, "when, in this age of materialism, all thinking people will thus retire from the world. The Convent life is the

*The Convent, by Alyse Simpson, Dents, London, 1939.

only life that has any meaning left" (p. 113). "Our bodies will henceforth be of no importance to us," was another official utterance, "so that only the spirit will have a chance to grow" (p. 96).

Did the Convent walls shut out all the doubts that inevitably arise when human beings begin to think, even in the silent cold cells of such an unnatural life? Doubts were denounced, of course, as diabolical. "Doubts had no right to exist . . . they were like measles . . . but once a year, those of us who were known to be seriously battling with their souls, were permitted to go in search of outside help." Yes, but not alone, not unguarded, not to the house of a friend or their own home. They were taken in a Black Maria, like the prisoners they were, to a church in the next town, where a clever Father-Confessor administered the usual dope to those luckless "battling souls." It was, says the author "like visiting a dentist or a lawyer. By this yearly visit we hoped to have all our difficulties removed. Just like that. In half an hour." (p. 219). And the atmosphere in this "hospital for doubters"! "There was an effigy of Christ crucified—a study in contrasts, in crude colouring, the hectic red of His oozing wounds and the putty-coloured body, shaded here and there with gum. Gazing upon such a realistic idol, one wanted to go out and worship the sun" (p. 225).

Mrs. Simpson ultimately decided to run away. She describes her decision as "mean and cowardly," and says, "it was simply that I had not the stuff in me for that kind of martyrdom" (p. 233). This view of the case will not be shared by any who are not yet sunk in the depths of theological prejudice, which refuses to judge human conduct by human criteria in the interests of social morality.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

"Universal Brotherhood"

It is possible, as Hogben points out, for psychologists to extend their tests, already operative as regards individuals and groups, so as to measure racial differences. Little has so far been done, but Ferguson (U.S.A.), for example, tested the intelligence of 486 white and 421 coloured children in certain schools. The coloured children were divided into four groups, full-blood negro, three-quarter negro, half-negro (mulatto) and quarter negro (quadroon). He found that the pure negroes scored 69.2 per cent as high as the whites, the three-quarter negroes 73.2, the mulattoes 81.2 and the quadroons 81.8 per cent.

Other investigations, e.g., Thorndike's, confirm that on the average the negro is inferior in intelligence. The practical difference is probably only partly reflected in the actual figures, and temperamental differences, it is thought, are far greater.

If such differences are characteristic, then it should be a matter of some concern as to who shall people the world. If the ideal of a universal brotherhood means that what MacDougall calls "the peoples of the lower cultures" are to settle in the white man's countries they will, he fears, squeeze out the whites, who would either have to reduce their standard of living or "deny themselves the luxury of children."

Dean Inge is even more alarmed. Will the U.S.A. become populated by negroes, France by Spaniards and Italians, Germany by Slavs; England and Scotland by the Irish? His "facts" are not entirely sound, however: for instance, the "mothers' strike" actually began in Ireland. As Haldane has shown, if we wish to know how population is to be diffused, it is not enough to examine graphs; we must know whether the foot is on the accelerator. We must compare the fertility of mothers and daughters to get

the net reproductive index. And the number of female children born, say, in 1922, less infant mortality, will have a direct bearing on births from 1940 to 1960.

Well over an average of 2 offspring per married woman is obviously required to keep a nation's population at "unity." During 1920-30, England, Germany and U.S.A. fell below unity. According to Haldane, in this country the excess of births over deaths will reach a maximum in 1940, after which will be a decline. Italy is falling towards unity (being yet above unity) and Germany, prior to Hitler, fell much below. Whether the (apparently temporary) rise under the Nazis was due to marriage loans or to a strict enforcement of the abortion laws is in dispute.* The U.S.S.R. and Japan are steady and well above unity, and Russia may expect an increase for another fifty years.

Inge, who opposed disarmament as impolitic, deplures, with MacBride and others, what he calls our "flabby sentimentalism." Half the time of the wise is spent repairing the wrong done by the good, and in regarding past wars the ex-Dean is inclined to withhold ethical judgments on war itself and see each in its historical setting as a landmark in human development. Was it better, he asks, to have left New Zealand to the Maoris, S. Africa to the Kaffirs, Australia to the blackfellows, America to the Redskins? Many were themselves invaders; the Maoris from overseas, the Bantus migrants from N. Africa and so on. Without war, he maintains, much of the globe would still be scantily populated by backward peoples, while remaining well suited to the abode of the progressive ones, and superiority is its own excuse. He therefore regards military preparedness as a justified threat of violence.

Nevertheless, war can be an important dysgenic factor, possibly contributing to the decline of Greece; Rome and Spain. "Castile makes men and wastes them." And it has been suggested that the demands of Napoleon have resulted in a present shortening of the stature among Frenchmen.

Those who hold that racial barriers could be overcome by a freer mixing, resulting in race-crossing by marriages, are likely to meet with a stout barrage of objections, not least based on scientific grounds alone. Prof. W. K. Castle opines that race-crossing would lead to the undoing of the foundations of civilization. It is a particular combination of qualities that make a race horse or a draft horse useful. Crossing is therefore futile and good for neither of them. Nor would the second generation, though more variable, be any more serviceable for either purpose. Internal diversities already existent, he holds, are wide enough to give the maximum benefits of crossing. "It is only when society becomes stratified and class distinctions arise with castes or families closely intermarrying that heredity is likely to bring Mendelian recessive defects repeatedly to the surface."

It is therefore surprising to note that R. A. Fisher thinks the immediate cause of social decay to be the depletion of the ruling classes. J. B. Haldane answers him in one of his characteristically witty asides by presuming that the toll taken of the ruling classes in the Wars of the Roses accounts for the decline (!) of culture in Elizabethan times.

Haldane also indicates that race-crossing is harmful. It is also irreversible—there is no back-peddalling—so that we should be most cautious. Perhaps specialization is of sociological advantage, and if so the genes should be kept intact. For instance, "the Negro is a thoroughly tropical animal; his dark skin shields him from the deleterious effects of the sun's rays and his wide nostrils permit of a large surge of air into and out

* Cf. *The Struggle for Population* (Glass).

of his lungs, and this surge plays an important part in ventilation and the getting rid of superfluous heat. He thrives in heat and in fact luxuriates in it, and competes eagerly for positions in the engine-room of the steamers on the equatorial lakes of Africa." (MacBride).

We are, of course, only touching the fringe of mighty subjects, yet as Shaw has put it, we can accept all men as brothers, but should be most careful whom we have for brothers-in-law. And if universal brotherhood is to mean anything more than the attainment of just and peaceful equilibrium among the different kinds of homo sapiens (the conditions perhaps necessarily imposed by what McDougall would call the peoples of the higher culture), then it bids fair to crumble in the light of genetic knowledge.

G. H. TAYLOR

The Plug Game

I REMEMBER once, when staying at St. Annes, a motor-car passing me on the highway, to the rear of which was attached in huge letters the words, "YES, WE HAVE NO BANANAS." The meaning of these enigmatic words was soon to be divulged to me. In Blackpool, at the entrances, in the middle, and at the ends of the piers, were chorus parties, and the song with that title was being more than frequently sung. In enclosures, and almost at every corner of the street, the tune was being strummed. It had been decreed that "Yes, we have no bananas," was to be the song of the year.

This process is known to the inner circle as "plugging." Three or four songs are chosen by experienced committees, students of popular taste, and they decree that the song "hits" of the year are to be this, that, or the other. They are experts, and very rarely do they make a mistake. If one of the chosen songs shows signs of going flat, then the plugging process is increased both in volume and vociferousness. The leaders of popular bands are approached to enter the item or items on their programmes, and in this way even the B.B.C. becomes, in time, involved in the game.

So with Pantomime hits. They, too, are decreed. It was inevitable that "Little Annie Rooney," "I've a waitin' for you, Josie," "Yip, I, Addy I A" should be the success of their respective years. Committees had arranged it.

When there is something to be sold, it is necessary to "plug" its virtues. If it hasn't got any virtues the more necessary it becomes to say that its merits are colossal. There will be so many people who agree with the boosting, in time, that the half-sceptical will join the glad throng in order to feel more comfortable. Plugged into them will be the belief that somebody's pills are worth a guinea a box, and that another gentleman's (or Lord's) circus is the greatest show on earth. When they have obtained a guinea's worth for a shilling there is one thing that can be reasonably depended upon, and that is that the vast majority of the purchasers will not be inclined to advertise their lack of acumen by telling their friends any fact that points to the contrary.

And so it comes about that our hoardings bear such messages as:—

Let us sing it once again,
Once more sing the old refrain,
Baxter's Hats and Boots are fine—
Five-and-Six and Eight-and-Nine.

All human weaknesses are known to the pluggers; they have learnt them by the process of trial and error. To plug successfully it is necessary to hang on to some human weakness. Clarke's Caudy will give you vir-

ility; Polloni's Powder will give you that Schoolgirl Complexion up to the age of eighty; a few nonagenarians will similarly testify for a small consideration. Professor P.'s Mnemonic Course will give you a good Memory; Professor Klapptrapp's Efficiency Course will soon put you among the "Thousand-a-Years." Twaddell's Tablets will bring back your youthful beauty and enable you to retain the love of a fickle husband; two of Amor's Lightning Lozenges nightly will give you glamour, make you the belle of the ball and bring platoons of males in the vicinity of sweet seventeen.

The popular shortcoming that makes most people the fair game of the predator is wishful thinking. Fasten a proprietary article on to one of the elemental wants of humanity, and it has its first great requisite. This is a lesson that has been learnt by others than the vendors of cheap dubious nostrums. It has been learnt by all those who, robbed of the short and easy way to success by the prevalence of popular education, soon observed a method of short-circuiting its dangers.

The popular press found that only very few want a thoughtful article argumentatively beyond reproach. They wanted matter adapted to their wants and wishes. So they gave them it. "Give the Public what they want," became the cry of the New Journalism. This they did and they obtained their reward.

The second step was reached when it was noticed that the public did not always want the convenient things; sometimes they wanted high wages. Sometimes they showed signs of a regrettable lack of docility. Then new slogans had to be strung together. "Beware of Agitators," or "Boys of the Bulldog Breed." "Rule Britannia" had to be strummed again. By this means a chorus could be got together, very, very audible, and the timid man, knowing the discomfort of being outside of a good, heartening, rousing chorus, joined in, hating to be thought peculiar.

Then came the wireless. Here was the ideal plugging apparatus. Sing the "Mountains of Mourne" on the Luxembourg Station, followed by an injunction to use Purple Pellets for Peritonitis and postmen would faint in their endeavours to deliver the packages asked for. The Wireless is one of the finest instruments of popular education ever discovered; some day it will be used seriously for that purpose. At present those in authority are barefaced Pluggers. On Sundays, when they say you must have a sermon you must have a sermon. They have always taken care you have no alternatives. This is the Achilles Heel of the British Broadcasting System. Try sending a polite, brief note to the *Listener*, or the *Radio Times*, asking for an explanation of this phenomenon in terms of democracy, and you will obtain all the proof you require.

Is it permissible to *plug* the facts? It is permissible to plug nothing unless the facts receive the right emphasis and are put in their right perspective. Unless indeed a set of facts is being deliberately concealed. Then the dragging of their correctives into the light becomes an attempt to produce that right perspective. The process has its dangers, and can run to extremes quite easily. But in the presence of deliberate suppression of the truth, it becomes legitimate propaganda to nail false coins to the counter and endeavour to put genuine coin into circulation. This, however, is an emergency measure called into existence by special enormities accounted for by gangs of coiners being at large. To circulate facts without regard to their emphases is as foreign to the normal business of Freethought as the circulation of lies.

T. H. ELSTON

Acid Drops

Anyone who wishes to see what a ridiculous thing the censorship is in action, should read an article which appeared in the *Evening Standard* for January 4. The war has made the press the mouthpiece of the Government, and the general public does not realize how ridiculous it is, to say nothing of its dangers. What kind of a preparation is the country getting for a real peace when the war is over! We have a dictatorship during the war, and we may expect another when the war is over—that is, unless something happens. And the worst of a censorship is that one can never be sure whether he is getting a little of the truth, or just a concocted falsehood. If we have a censorship we should like to see the items blacked out in the papers. That would help a little.

Mr. Mackenzie King, Prime Minister of Canada, says that "most of the censorship is nonsense," and has asked his officials not to agree automatically to censor matter that Government Departments wish kept from the public. We agree with this. It is horse sense. Give a man in power the right to censor and he has a very handy weapon for covering up his own blunders and those with whom he is associated. A censorship will and should have a very limited scope when this country has become a democracy. At present one of the chief dangers of a censorship is that it helps to prevent our becoming a democracy. A childish trustfulness in the supreme wisdom of a censor is fatal to intelligent self-government, but an excellent method of fooling the public. There are risks run in telling the truth, but they are neither as numerous nor as dangerous as telling the truth.

The Russian Press Bureau has protested that the Soviet bombing of Finland has been greatly exaggerated. We are quite prepared to believe that exaggeration has taken place. A war atmosphere gives all sorts of liars a chance for exercise—governmental, press, pulpit, and individual liars have an unequalled opportunity, exceeded only when we are dealing with a religious crusade. But the "lady doth protest too much," and it quite ignores the ground of the protest—which is that there should have been any bombing at all. It would be a poor defence for the members of the I.R.A., who have been arrested for scattering bombs in London, to plead that the damage done was not very great; the reply, the complete reply, is that it is not the size of the offence, but the quality, the nature of it, that is of importance. And the Russian Press Bureau has been doing its friends in London an ill-service, for they have denied altogether the bombing of civilians. Moscow is merely helping an unknown and invisible Finnish Army.

It is only a lack of a controlled imagination that regards bombing, or suffering in general as being fundamentally affected by the number of people injured or killed. Suffering is in all cases individual. There is not more toothache because fifty people have it than if it occurs in one case only. There are more people suffering, but that does not multiply the pain, it only increases the number of people who feel pain. If a man has a boil on the back of his neck his boil does not hurt less if his is the only boil in the country, or more if half a dozen of his neighbours have boils at the same time and also on the back of their necks. If the Russians bombed only ten civilians where the Japanese bombed a thousand, that too only increased the number of individuals who suffer, it leaves the suffering in every case exactly where it was—neither more nor less. When we are intelligent enough and civilized enough to realize this and to feel that wrong or brutality is the same in every case, we shall then probably have imagination enough to realize that wrong done or needless pain inflicted are on the same level, and we shall not wait until we are getting plenty for our money before we take steps to prevent both.

We agree with the remarks that have been made in some of the newspapers concerning the return to England of Unity Mitford, the daughter of Lord Redesdale.

The turning out of the military to guard her on her arrival was absurd, and an insult to the British public. No one would have ill-treated a girl—even of the Unity Mitford kind—who was obviously too ill to walk unassisted, and who, in any case, was of no consequence whatever. This is not Hitler's territory yet, although Lord Redesdale, as well as his daughter, appears to be admirers of Hitler the contemptible. The incident, however, may serve as a reminder to the public that there are many admirers of Hitler in high places in this country, and we must be on our guard lest they sabotage the peace—whenever it arrives. These British Hitlerites are silent for the moment, but the subsidization of Fascism has gone on for some time in this country. Probably Munich was partly due to this underground influence, which appears to be still very active.

Miss Mitford is reported as saying that she was glad to be back in England, although she was "on the other side." If she is capable of anything like reasoning, we invite her to imagine what would have happened in her beloved country if she, as a German woman, had gone home and made the same remark. She certainly would not have had such a public demonstration on her return, but would have been plunged into a concentration camp to meditate on the humanity of Hitler and Co. It is said that Miss Mitford is suffering from loss of memory and cannot recall how she met with the accident (said to have been a shot in the head), but she hopes to recover her memory later. We are not a medical man, neither are we a prophet, but with considerable confidence we prophecy that Unity Mitford will never recover her memory to the extent of making public how that "accident" happened, that is unless Goebbels discovers that Mr. Churchill employed someone to shoot her. When Parliament meets a question ought to be asked about this miserable business. That the military display was wholly due to fears of public disorder is obvious nonsense.

Sabbath fanatics have a pill to swallow. The Home Office has authorized local authorities to open cinemas on Sundays without the necessity of a town's meeting or a poll! The condition is that troops quartered locally require the shows. But there's always a loophole for reactionaries in our legislation. The "snag" here is that the authorities are not *compelled* to meet the wishes of the military in this regard. So the L.D.O.S. and kindred organizations have opportunity to play their old game.

The Lord's Day Observance Society has suffered another misfortune. Hardly had it recovered from the last blow of opening cinemas for soldiers on Sunday, when it receives another punch from the B.B.C. The B.B.C. is arranging that there shall be an alternative broadcast of light songs and music running at the same time as the usual programme. But there is to be no exception on Sundays. That will also have its alternative programme, and it is this that has seriously upset Mr. Martin, the Secretary of the L.D.O.S. He sees us plunging down the deep descent into the sea. He knows that fifty per cent of those who listen to the Church service, in the absence of anything else will forsake the droning of the preacher for the more cheerful tones of the entertainer.

Entering the Church of the English Martyrs at Stepney, London, Bridget Cotter, 29, domestic servant, knelt to pray. Then she rose from her pious performance, went to the altar, and from an offertory-box took some money. Yet the sequel to this holy rite landed her at Thames Police Court on a charge of *stealing*! She told the magistrate that, being hungry, she wanted money to buy food, foolishly omitting a plea that God or the Holy Virgin had answered her prayer. A week's remand in custody may have given Bridget Cotter time to reflect—or rue—that no "English Martyr" intervened, on behalf of God or Mother Mary, to justify her in "the faith" of abstracting tenpence from the box. Tenpence! and holy church alone knows what absolution is going to cost her.

The so-called "Problem of Evil" has been the excuse for millions of words, mostly foolish, written and spoken mostly by ignorance. We would not like to say that the Archbishop of York's pronouncement, quoted in the *Guardian*, is more absurd than others, but it is quite as silly as any. He says:—

Surely one of the best things in life is moral victory—but to demand victory without any antagonist is to demand something which has no meaning; to remove evil from the world is to remove the possibility of the best thing in life; victorious spiritual excellence is something better than untroubled innocence; if evil is overcome, it is better it should first exist.

It is true that Peace is decidedly a good thing after a ghastly war, but it does not justify the war. It would be nonsense to say that war "should first exist"! Anti-aircraft precautions, and the salvaging of ships torpedoed by U. boats are, we hope, better than aerial and submarine war just as certain drugs are said to cure specific diseases. But who shall say that disease, death and murder are any "satisfaction" to any but the insane? Civilization says Prevention is better than Cure. God and the Archbishops must show us a better justification for their existence than a glorification of "evil."

The Rev. K. L. Perry of Bristol says it is a "hideous blasphemy for Hitler to use the name of God and claim his help." Why? The Rev. should read a little of history. He would then find any number of thorough-paced scoundrels who had a sincere belief in God, who thanked him for victories, prayed to him for help, and had a genuine belief that God was on their side. The belief in God never yet prevented a liar lying, a thief stealing, or a brute being brutal. Mr. Perry might introduce just a gleam of common sense into his preaching. It might attract attention, on the principle that "Dog bites man" is not news. "Man bites dog," is.

"The Holy Ghost and Us" is an ancient jest in Holy (and Sometimes Funny) Writ. The Rev. J. A. Findlay, of Didsbury College goes further still. He just tells the Holy Ghost—and the other two thirds of God—where he gets off, so to speak:—

I do not believe that it is wrong to pray for victory, because, as far as I can see at present, only by achieving some kind of defeat of the powers that rule Germany now can this generation take its part in keeping Christian civilization alive in Western Europe. I say "so far as I can see," because I am conscious of my ignorance. But, until God has given me more light, I shall go on telling Him how much I long for victory.

It seems hard lines indeed to imagine that God won't feel highly flattered by Mr. Findlay's patronage. But Mr. Findlay leaves God a loop-hole after all. He concludes like any flunkey would do—cap in hand—before the Squire

If it is not possible—well then, His will must be done, and we must resign ourselves to it.

Talk of this kind is a different business from the Bible glibness: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name ye shall receive"!

Naturally, Freethinkers have a shrewd idea as to what constitutes "blasphemy" in the Christians' point of view. Therefore, we cannot think that the *Sunday Express* has much of a circulation among the congregations, after seeing an illustration to an article stamping Hitler as the Anti-Christ. (There's always a new "Anti-Christ" during critical stages of the world's later history. Napoleon was one, Lenin another, and so on). The picture is the reproduction of an actual photograph, and portrays two nuns, who might, denuded of their habits, pass as modern "lovelies," worshipping at a cross on which hangs, with painless pose, the nude figure of a woman of voluptuous form, strewn with more sex appeal than anything turned out from Hollywood. The beauty's arms are folded languorously behind her head, not stretched out on the cross, and there is no suggestion of suffering or "spiritual exaltation" in the whole production. The *Sunday Express* might enlighten us should we have missed some "divine" allegory—or Truth.

The Roman Catholic Church is very much concerned over the welfare of children—when they are the offspring of Roman Catholics. And even then it is only as they present material for the Church. Thus, for some time there has been trouble concerning the children of Roman Catholics who have been evacuated, but who have not been provided with Roman Catholic homes. Now Father Dukes, of St. Francis Xavier, Liverpool has decided to order Roman Catholics to recall their children from North Wales, unless the local Council will appoint a Priest to look after them. There is no complaint of bad treatment, as is shown on Father Duke's own confession.

Ours must be a strong line of action. We must convince them that Catholic parents regard their children's souls as of infinitely greater importance than their bodies. Hence I beg of you to write at once to your children in these five villages recalling them to Liverpool. Many of them will weep at being separated from homes and kindly folk they have learned to love, but you will have the satisfaction of knowing that once again you have put your children's eternal interest before their temporal welfare.

So much for the humanity of the Church. These children have been removed to put them in areas where they may escape bombing. The Church would rather see them bombed in Liverpool than living happily, for a brief period, with Protestants in Wales. The Church runs true to form. It will be remembered that it was Roman Catholics who raised objections to the children coming here from Spain, at a time when godly Germans and Roman Catholic Italians were machine gunning and bombing the civilian population.

We have good reason to question the accuracy of Christian statistics which suggest that Christianity is increasing the number of its believers. The *Manchester Guardian* recently contained a Report on the work of Army Chaplains in France amongst the B.E.F. This report—from the *Manchester Guardian's* special correspondent—alleges that

on the evidence of letters which the chaplains censor, the average soldier is more religious than his fellows in the last war.

We wish the *Manchester Guardian* man had made clearer the fact that the ONLY "evidence" of this increased religiosity in the B.E.F. is to be found in the unsupported statements of "chaplain censors." We know there are more unbelievers everywhere, and in so far as the British recruit is a better informed man than the 1914 one, we are sure that the army—like the population at large—is more indifferent than ever to the calls of religious creeds. It does not sound well to read that Army Chaplains are also Censors of the men's private correspondence. We hope someone will raise this question in the House. It is a monstrous piece of sectarianism.

"Comparisons are odious"—but the American Bible Society nevertheless claims that Germany's "best-seller" is not *Mein Kampf*, but the Bible, which exceeded the sales of Hitler's book "by 200,000 copies." The Society's anxiety to prove that its Bible is more popular than the Nazi bible reckons not of Hitler's reaction to its statement. It really seems to indicate some similarity between the two works which makes the choice for Germans difficult.

In realms of fiction the world is used to the boost of the Bible as the "best seller." But it appears to have had a bad flop in the Isle of Wight. No copy could be found to serve at an inquest there on a Parkhurst convict. "Where is the prison chaplain?" cried coroner Francis A. Joyce; who added: "He ought to have one." Warders dashed out to scour the prison for the perjury plumbline, and one returned with a New Testament. He was beaten, however, by the coroner's officer who had borrowed a whole Bible from a nearby cottage. Thus was truth saved—officially. The somewhat aged convict might have been declared a corpse through wintering in a cold cell instead of having died from pneumonia if that abracadabra hadn't turned up.

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THE General Secretary of the N.S.S. acknowledges a donation of five shillings to the Benevolent Fund from T. Dixon.

V. SORENSON.—We expect that many of the clergy will not be pleased to find themselves in the company of the blind the mentally defective and people of unsound mind as being relieved from registering with a view to military service. But it follows the usual line.

E. J. S. CUTTS.—Pleased you are so interested, and congratulate you on having made so important a convert. Specimens being sent to address given.

D. MARSH.—We do not see in what way the plots and counterplots of different nations, in which Russia appears to have taken a hand, alters the character of the invasion of Finland. We have no greater liking for the underhand manoeuvres of this country than we have for similar conduct in others. We can never have peace in the world until we have done away with secret diplomacy, and we readily admit that we have never had such disastrous doses of this as we have under the Macdonald, Baldwin and Chamberlain Governments.

We are asked to make the following corrections in Dr. Hardwicke's article which appeared in our last issue: Line 2—For "Piscisoli" read *Pisciculi*. Page 6 Line 23—For "Bishops Alexandria," read *Bishops of Alexandria*.

D. FISHER.—In saying that there is often a choice between war and something worse, we mean when the alternative to war is the surrender of something without which life loses its value. This has occurred over and over again in the history of peoples within a nation, and also as between nations.

R. DODD.—We thought we had made it quite clear on many occasions that we are under no delusion concerning the quality of our own "democracy." We have not yet shaken off the rule of an aristocracy, the old school-tye is still powerful, and huge financial interests have far too much power. But we have the *legal right* to make a democracy if we will. That is something worth preserving, particularly at a time when we have three huge totalitarian States sneering at Democracy as being out of date. And we quite fail to see why we should not protest against Russia and Germany threatening to dominate by force Finland, Denmark, Sweden and Norway because we have people in this country ready to use these countries to their own ends. In this country, at least, the opposition, whether Communist or others, has the legal right to speak and write. And our electoral system has not yet reached the absurd point when no opponent to the Government is permitted to stand for election.

E.S.P.—Much obliged for selected pars, from papers. Those of our readers who send such items are giving us real help. It would save us much time and trouble if we had someone at hand who could do this kind of work and so leave us more time for other matters.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

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The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

Sugar Plums

An applicant for exemption from military service recently told a tribunal that he had been taught Atheism at the Elliot Central School, Merton Road, S.W. The headmaster of the school denied that Atheism had been taught at his school. It is now stated that the time referred to was prior to 1925, before the present headmaster had been appointed. The *News-Chronicle* adds that the statement "in no way casts any reflection" on the present headmaster.

We are interested in the charge and its explanation for two reasons. First, we do not believe without strong evidence that either before 1925, or afterwards Atheism was ever taught in any Council School in this country. And the tale belongs to the period in which Russians were still pictured in passing round their wives, daughters and mothers in a quite promiscuous manner. (It is quite interesting to note how the Christian imagination runs to stories of this kind). We have come across this statement many times, but have never seen any evidence. If it happened to be true, we should have a higher opinion of the mental courage of most teachers than we have at present, since they would be risking their position probably, and their promotion certainly.

Next we should like the *News-Chronicle* to forget for once that it is a Christian newspaper, and explain to us, on lines of strict social justice why if Theism is taught in schools, and often a primitive form of Christianity that educated Christians are ashamed of, why Atheism should not likewise be taught. Is there any greater injustice taxing Christians to pay for the teaching of Atheism, than in taxing Atheists for teaching Christianity? This be a simple question, and we should like the *News-Chronicle*, once in a while, to give a plain answer to a plain question. But we haven't the slightest expectation that the paper will avail itself of the opportunity offered.

Readers who intend visiting the Royal Academy Exhibition at Burlington House, Piccadilly, held in aid of the Red Cross and the Artists' Benevolent Society, might be pleased to note two etchings there by our contributor, Mr. H. Cutner. It is his first appearance at a Royal Academy Exhibition.

In the Leicester Secular Society's Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester, to-day (January 14), at 3 p.m., Mr. R. H. Roselli will lecture on "The World, Religion, and Unbelief." The syllabus provided by the Society is an attractive one, and the greater comfort of attending and returning in daylight definitely justifies commencing the lecture at an afternoon hour.

That quaint blend of conservative prejudice and progressive opinion, the *Evening Standard*, deserves a tribute to its editorial entitled "Gag Dr. Inge?" published on the 3rd inst. Of people who "would like the application of free principles of Government to be postponed" till the war is over, it says: "If they have their way they will get the totalitarianism they deserve." The writer goes on: "Some readers of the *Evening Standard*, for instance, have protested against the publication in our columns of certain expressions of opinion by Dr. Inge. The Doctor is opposed to the war. He might wish to see us preparing to meet the challenge of Russia rather than fighting Germany. These views are not shared by the *Evening Standard*. But we have no intention of gagging the doctor because we dislike his opinions, for the single reason that someone else might come along and try to gag us because he disliked ours. . . . They might wish to shut our mouths just as some would like to shut the Doctor's." Certainly our contemporary's reason could have been on a higher ethical plane, but so far so good.

Feudalism in Church and State

AFTER the Norman victory at Hastings when Harold, the last of the Saxon Kings, was slain, the Conqueror was almost immediately elected as Harold's successor by the Witan and crowned on Christmas Day, 1066, by the very Archbishop who officiated at the coronation of the dead ruler. Supported by the sacerdotal influence of the Papacy, which was eagerly solicitous in restraining the independence of the English Church, William the Norman assumed the title of King of England and assented to the conditions imposed by the Saxon Coronation Oath.

William apparently desired to succeed to the throne as the appointed and rightful ruler from the time of Edward the Confessor's death. In that capacity he was morally bound to respect the ancient laws and customs of the realm, but, despite his professions of constitutional rulership, he practically reigned as a despotic monarch, who disregarded everything that ran counter to his own inclinations. None the less, the established Saxon Constitution was still unbroken, however autocratic the conduct of the Norman sovereign. Indeed, the Conquest may be fairly regarded more as a turning point than a novel departure in the evolution of the English people. Freeman opined that, with minor modifications, the laws remained substantially the same and, constitutionally considered, the prerogatives of the Crown were essentially those that existed in the period of Edward the Confessor.

The Norman blood introduced into England was little more than an infusion for, in the course of a century, it became as absorbed as the preceding Celtic and Danish had been in the mass of the Anglo-Saxon population. Norman, Saxon and Dane alike, were mainly of Teutonic stock. As Langmead intimates: "The Normans were in fact Norsemen who instead of coming direct from Scandinavia had sojourned for a century and a half in a French home. While retaining much of the Norse character they had acquired the language and civilization of the Romanized Gauls and Franks."

Nor were the Norsemen strangers to the island they had invaded. As Macaulay noted, in Saxon times the native princes were educated in Normandy. "English sees and English estates were bestowed on Normans. The French of Normandy was familiarly spoken in the Palace at Westminster." Still, the changes made by the Norman ascendancy were extensive. Kingly authority was accentuated; administration became more centralized, thus diminishing the jurisdiction of local government. Official titles were changed; the thanes were replaced by Norman intruders, and although the Saxon laws were nominally retained their administration was materially altered. Yet, the outstanding changes related to the establishment of feudalism in every department of civil life, while the confiscation on an immense scale of landed property ultimately made the monarch the supreme landowner who granted feudal tenures to his favoured barons.

Ostensibly within his legal rights, the Conqueror at the outset took possession of the rich Crown domains, together with the extensive estates of the fallen Godwin family, while adding those of others suspected of disloyalty to the throne. Then, over 1,400 valuable manors situated in various shires were reserved to the Crown, while those remaining were distributed among the King's military adherents. For a time William permitted the original Saxon estate owners to retain their lands. But Ashworth infers that the English who were allowed to redeem their estates were compelled to acknowledge a regrant from the Norman

ruler. Thus the leading Saxon landholders resumed possession as a free gift, but the lesser proprietors were only guaranteed their patrimony in return for a monetary consideration.

When the King was absent in France, the two ministers he left in charge so shamelessly abused their temporary authority that the oppressed people rose in revolt and the insurrection spread so continuously that the first four years of William's reign were signalized by the repression of insurgency. Each successive uprising was made the pretext for the confiscation of the estates of all who were suspected of complicity or openly assisted the rebels. By these means almost all the land of the kingdom became Crown property, which William granted to his supporters. This they were to hold under feudal tenure, the system which prevailed in their native Normandy. Still, at the time when the Domesday Survey was undertaken, a few estates remained excepted from an almost universal feudal tenure, but under Henry I. the whole of the landed system appears to have come under feudal sway.

The researches of Flach and Kremer indicate that at the period of the Norman Conquest the feudal system was firmly established in France and other Continental lands. Its inception has been traced both to Roman and Teutonic sources, but its chief developments were due to the grants made by the Frankish rulers under a system of vassalage to the King. Moreover, the gradual conversion of allodial (freehold) into feudal tenure, was accelerated very materially, as Langmead says, by "the voluntary action of the smaller free proprietors who, in an age of lawlessness and rapine were glad to submit their persons and estates by way of *commendation* to some powerful neighbouring lord. Not only the possessions of laymen, but those of the Church, became subject to the all pervading feudal influence: the bishops and abbots equally with the feudal barons, swearing fealty to the King or other superior for their lands and exercising feudal jurisdiction and authority over their own vassals."

Social and economic forces had also furthered the growth of feudalism in England, but its progress had been tardy and more influenced by Teutonic factors. Indeed, no feudal system existed as such in England before the conquest, but all its ingredients were already in the land. The two essential features of feudalism have been defined as: "The personal relation of lord and vassal founded on contract and binding the parties to mutual fidelity, the one owing protection, the other service and the holding of the usufruct (benefit or profit) of the land on the condition of rendering military service, the ultimate property remaining in the lord." This system was slowly maturing in Saxon times when a landless man was beginning to be regarded as anomalous and little better than an outlaw. Also the indigenous development of feudalism was accelerated by the policy of placing the control of counties under powerful earls who occasionally succeeded in bequeathing their authority to their offspring. This arrangement existed under Canute and was continued under the Confessor.

Well aware of the danger to the Crown of potent and turbulent barons under the Continental system of feudalism, William decided to exclude its operations from the administration itself. Certainly when considered as a system of land tenure, the Conqueror established it in England. But he retained the traditional Saxon custom that every estate holder, mesne tenant and tenant-in-chief should take the oath of fealty to the Crown. So in 1086 the famous Gemot of Salisbury was convened. This assembly is said to have been attended by the Witan and all the leading landholders of the kingdom, and under a statute here

enacted every estate owner was bound to swear an oath of allegiance to the throne.

This public acknowledgment of royal supremacy immediately succeeded the completion of the Domesday Survey which covered every county in the kingdom, save the four northern counties and part of what is now Lancashire. This was a strikingly detailed document which furnished information to the Crown concerning any increase in land values. In an editorial footnote to Langmead's *Constitutional History*, Ashworth notes that: "The returns were transmitted to Winchester, digested, and recorded in two volumes which have descended to posterity under the name of Domesday Book. The name is probably derived from *Domus Dei*, the name of a chapel or vault in the Cathedral of Winchester in which the Survey was first deposited. From this authentic record our most certain information is obtained as to the Old English Common Law as it appears in the local customs referred to: the character of municipal government; the financial system of the shires while still under the administration of the earls; and the general political and social conditions of England towards the end of William's reign."

In order to keep disaffected barons in subjection, the King distributed the estates he bestowed in well separated regions. It is true that the Conqueror created the Palatine Counties of Chester, Durham and Kent, but the authority conferred on their administrators was essential for protection against Welsh marauders, Scottish freebooters and Continental invasion. But two of the appointed ministers were clerics who, as nominal celibates, could leave no offspring to succeed them, while another curb on baronial insurgency was the retention of all the customary powers of the Shire and the Hundred which served to limit their manorial jurisdiction.

Not until the reign of Charles II. were the feudal tenures of William and his son Rufus abolished. The law of primogeniture and the custom of family settlements testify to the protracted survival of feudal law. Again, it remains in the legal theory that "all the lands and tenements in England in the hands of subjects are held mediately or immediately of the King."

Before the Conquest the Church had been partly independent, but it was now more firmly linked with Rome. Alien priests displaced the national clergy, and clerical domination grew greater. Still, while William was admittedly much beholden to the Pope, he never displayed the least intention to tolerate Roman domination. Pope Hildebrand's haughty command that all Christian princes were to hold their dominions as fiefs of the Holy See, he unceremoniously rejected when he flatly refused to do fealty for the English Crown. The King also separated the civil from the ecclesiastical jurisdiction in the Courts, and he ordained that in future no bishop or archdeacon should adjudicate in any ecclesiastical matter in the Shire or Hundred Court. All such litigation must henceforth be conducted before a bishop competent to adjudicate according to the Canon or Ecclesiastical Law.

William also conserved secular authority with three rules of Royal Supremacy. These were: That no Pope should be acknowledged or Papal letters received in England, without the King's consent.

That the decree of national Synods should not be binding without the King's confirmation.

That the King's barons and officers should not be excommunicated, or constrained by any penalty of ecclesiastical rigour without his permission.

Then, to make assurance doubly sure, the landed property of Church dignitaries previously held under

allodial (freehold) title or in free alms were in the great majority of instances converted into baronies subject to military service under the dominion of the Crown.

T. F. PALMER

Thou Shalt Kill

WHEN in a *Freethinker* article recently, I wrote that the Commandment "Thou shalt not kill," was a perfect example of what a law ought to be: brief, plain, beyond doubt; easily understood by the most elementary intelligence, and absolutely incapable of being falsified by commentary, I was challenged by a correspondent, Mr. G. H. Taylor. He said that I had omitted the most important part of any law, i.e., that it should be worth following and wanted to "modify," "Thou shalt not kill," in favour of voluntary euthanasia and killing burglars. In other words: "Thou shalt kill in certain circumstances."

This raises a matter of cardinal importance to the whole human race present and future, so that it is worth some free thought. To kill or not to kill—that is the question. Few real killers, by profession, whether soldiers, hangmen or murderers, believe in killing or being killed wholeheartedly. But very many theoretical killers whose mouth or pen is their only weapon, seem to believe in killing thoroughly, and to take a hearty dislike to anyone who expresses disbelief in this sacred activity. When you are not in the Fighting Forces and you express disbelief in killing people they call you a Pacifist though you be as challenging and aggressive as Shaw, Wells or Aldous Huxley, and this term "Pacifist" seems, in England, in war-time to be a term of reproach, if not abuse. But if you are an officer in the trenches as I was in 1914-1918, and you disbelieve in killing or being killed, everyone knows you are a sensible professional, and your fellow-fighters have confidence in you because they know that you (and they) will only kill or be killed if you can't help it. No one calls anyone in fighting-uniform "a Pacifist" by the way, however pacific he may be in fact, like my old commanding officer Field-Marshal Lord Milne, who has been explaining this week, how "we soldiers" dread and loathe war.

Well, the majority of human beings have always been Taylors since the days of Cain, the reputed first killer, and they still are, especially just now. But a small minority have always disagreed: Moses, Erasmus, Thackeray, Voltaire, Tolstoy, Dick Sheppard are odd names that occur to me, and I dare say more will occur to you. No doubt the day will dawn when everyone will agree that killing must cease entirely. For the step from the forbidding of private killing to the forbidding of State killing is but a logical step after all, and nowadays in our hearts most of us believe in this future.

Anyhow, not a wilderness of Taylors, to parody Shylock, will move me from the standpoint that "Thou shalt not kill" is excellent as it is. Whether a law is "worth following" (by the way) is no part of a law—that is a matter of opinion, something quite outside the law itself, a question for moralists not jurists—and anyway this law, a masterpiece of jurisprudence, is emphatically worth following. That humanity has failed to follow it is the tragedy of humanity; and, as a result of that failure we have suicides, murders, massacres, duels, vendettas, revolutions, executions, punitive expeditions, national defence and war—in short, every form of homicide. A pretty catalogue of evil that brings a thousand other consequent evils upon us! All because our Taylors throughout the ages

have succeeded in "modifying"—that is to say, perverting, a juridical masterpiece.

If Moses created, or promulgated, that law he was a jurist of genius. No wonder men accustomed to the abominably stupid complexities of most human legislation believed it to be God's Commandment. After comparing it with any piece of our ghastly House of Commons legislation, any sensible man of our day will almost believe that too. And if you do not see what I mean I invite you to compare "Thou shalt not kill" with the English law against killing with its Justifiable Homicide, Excusable Homicide, Manslaughter, Murder where the death must follow "within a year and a day," and the MacNaughten Rules, and the lengthy cases and commentary upon it all set out in Archbold. Possibly Moses studied jurisprudence amongst the subtle Egyptians for clearly he was no amateur. But his great law was too perfect for human-nature's daily food, and I am quite sure all the Taylors amongst his Israelites instantly and successfully clamoured for its "modification." And to this day because the human race cannot recognize or obey a masterpiece of law when they see it, we suffer for our folly and knavery both as individuals and nations.

That great mind, Dean Swift would have agreed with me upon law. You remember the passage in Gulliver concerning the land of Brobdingnag: "No law of that country must exceed in words the number of letters in their alphabet. . . . But indeed few of them extend even to that length. They are expressed in the most plain and simple terms wherein those people are not mercurial enough to discover above one interpretation: and to write a comment upon any law is a capital crime." And how well Swift knew the dangers of laws being "perverted, confounded and eluded" by modifications. "They avoid nothing more than multiplying unnecessary words"—the exact antithesis of our Parliamentary and Departmental legislation, which is extremely bad jurisprudence indeed, however meritorious it may be from other standpoints.

Observe that it is always the same excuse that the Taylors give for "modifying" this law of life in favour of a law of death. They invent a Super-Bogey and terrify themselves into arguing that killing is necessary. Our Mr. Taylor runs true to type by inventing a Super-silly Burglar "coming down the road breaking into house after house and murdering the occupants." No real burglar is so indiscriminate, so super-industrious, or so promiscuously homicidal as this and the fabled creature resembles a lunatic rather than a burglar. However Mr. Taylor would shoot him (or so he says) oblivious of the fact that the shooting of a lunatic, even a dangerously homicidal one, is not lightly allowed in England. (Of course he would be better-advised to dial 999, even if he possess a Firearms' Certificate from Scotland Yard and a firearm.) All of which goes to show that some people in discussing killing are apt to take leave of commonsense. Nations are no better. They invent Encirclement-Bogey, a Hegemony of Europe Bogey or Balance-of-Power Bogey or Aggression-Bogey or other imaginative unrealities, and proclaim "Thou shalt kill" as the only possible cure-all for these diseased-brain horrors. And so the dreary story of human slaughter continues; demanded by States, blessed by Churches and acquiesced in by ordinary folk who are the feeding-stuff of Moloch.

Great religionists have swelled the cry for blood. Calvin justified war as well as eternal damnation. Luther did much for human liberation, but what a brute and deluded fool he was on this subject. Listen to him: "The hand which bears the sword is no longer man's hand but God's. It is not man but God

who hangs, breaks on the wheel, beheads, strangles and makes wars." On the other hand we all know that noble protests against war from solitary individuals have never been utterly silenced. You recall Erasmus's strong and courageous protest: "What is war but murder? Nothing is more base than war. The man who engages in war by choice is a wicked man; he is guilty of the most aggravated and complicated impiety." And Thackeray's outburst against the soldier: "I hate him and his trade."

Tell me, what see we to admire
in epaulettes and scarlet coats,
In men because they load and fire,
And know the art of cutting throats.

Slowly the view that "Thou shalt kill" is utterly wrong for nations as for private judgment gains headway and even Dean Inge this very year has written of "the folly and wickedness of this terrible institution, the curse of the human race," and told us that the Lutheran view of war is "diabolical."

Indeed we are all getting so frightened of the abysses into which modern killing is leading us that neither Germany nor England dare employ its full force against each other. You have the amazing, and in a sense, ludicrous, spectacle of a million English infantry losing three lives on land in four months.

For my own personal part, contemplating the spectacle of human idiocy, I am as prepared as any other man to put on a uniform again and kill or be killed, on the principle that in a lunatic asylum one behaves as the rest. This may seem inconsistent, but there are many worse things than soldiering which has much enjoyment in it, and one must die somehow sometime. Moreover the consistency of Quakers in accepting the benefits of war without soldiering and taking the pains of war does not greatly appeal to me. But if I soldier (an army verb), I will chocolate-soldier if I can, like every soldier of sense. And even in soldiering, I am not prepared to pretend that I think killing or being killed is right or that "Thou shalt not kill" is not as near perfect jurisprudence as the human mind has ever legislated. As for suicides (including "voluntary euthanasia") that form of legalized murder—may be a degree less wicked than killing one's fellow, but common-sense regards them in general as a degree more foolish. Life may be a miserable thing, but it is all we have, and unfortunately it has to be surrendered before most of us have accomplished much worth doing.

To conclude. Nothing is wrong with this Mosaic Law as law, but all is wrong with humanity's modifications of it. Contemplating the diabolical sufferings human beings have inflicted on other human beings by the perversion of that law, I am driven to echo the strong language of Swift's King that we men are indeed the "most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the face of the earth."

C. G. L. DU CANN

Wisdom discovers our relations, duties and concerns in respect of men, with the natural grounds of them; thereby both qualifying and inclining us to the discharge of them; whence exceeding convenience, pleasure and content ensues. By it we understand we are parts and members of the great body, the universe; and are therefore concerned in the good management of it, and are therefore obliged to procure its order and peace, and by no irregular undertaking to disturb or discompose it; which makes us honest and peaceable men.

Barrow, "Sermon on the Pleasantness of Religion"

The Origin of the Bible

II.

THE one point on which Biblical scholars are in a hopeless confusion is the great difference between the text of the Hebrew Massoretic Old Testament and the Greek translation known as the Septuagint. Granting that the translators did not understand every word and phrase of the text before them which they were rendering into Greek, there still remains some unaccountable differences in actual statement. What exactly was the text which they had to translate? Was it in Hebrew—that is, was it in the Hebrew of the Pentateuch?

In his new edition of *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, Sir Frederic frankly confesses that the difficulties are there, and that whatever progress has been made in Biblical study we are still in the dark on this point. Here are his own words:—

Rightly or wrongly, it is certain that the Septuagint differs from the Massoretic text to a very marked extent. The discrepancies are least in the Pentateuch . . . the larger discrepancies . . . are sufficient to show that the Hebrew text which lay before the authors of the Septuagint differed very considerably from that which the Massorettes have handed down to us. What the explanation of this difference may be, or which of the two texts is generally to be preferred, are questions to which it would be rash, in the present state of our knowledge, to pretend to give a decided answer.

If a layman like myself may suggest a line of thought, it is that we are all too ready to accept "tradition," that is, the tradition that there was a Hebrew Bible from which the Septuagint was made. What exactly is the proof of this assertion? I confess that in the course of some pretty extensive reading I have come across no real evidence that there was a Hebrew Bible in Old Hebrew characters. There may have been, of course; but there may have been only a number of old documents giving some of the past history of the Jewish race. But we know nothing for certain; and certainly we do *not* know if Hebrew, that is, the Pentateuch Hebrew, was the language in which these documents were written, if there were any.

There is very little doubt that substantially the Hebrew text of the Old Testament which is in present use is the same as that handed down to us by the celebrated Rabbi Akiba and his followers. Indeed, it is in all probability he and his students who put it together late in the first or early in the second century—of course, from other documents. The Massorettes, who found this text was being corrupted, and as it was without vowels, little understood, settled its meaning once for always by the insertion of vowel points and in other ways, such as marginal notes. But this took place about the fifth or sixth or seventh century—nobody knows for certain; and the increasing study of the Septuagint has undoubtedly unsettled the touching faith in the Hebrew text which has hitherto distinguished almost all textual scholars.

Sir Frederic does his best to hold the scales evenly, but what can even the most erudite of scholars do with such a complex problem? It is a fact that the Septuagint and the Hebrew text differ very considerably, and in important particulars, and very often the Samaritan text supports the Greek. So does the version known as the Old Latin, which must have been made very early—the second or third century.

But there is another consideration to which Sir Frederic does not devote enough attention. It is simply that the New Testament, when quoting the Old, does so from the Septuagint. This would not actually matter much, but it is "Our Lord" who

thus prefers the Greek version to the Hebrew original. Now, as the only begotten Son of God, Jesus must have known that he was quoting a translation of his Father's inspired Scriptures, and therefore, so to speak, he gave his weighty authority to the Greek translation as against the Hebrew. Christian scholars should therefore have always preferred the Septuagint; yet we find Sir Frederic Kenyon giving his own opinion that it is the *Hebrew* text which should be considered the authoritative one. He says:—

The authors of our Revised Version "thought it more prudent to adopt the Massoretic Text as the basis of their work, and to depart from it, as the Authorized Translators had done, only in exceptional cases." There can be no doubt that they did rightly. The versions have as yet been too insufficiently studied to justify a general use or a rash reliance upon them. . . . If the Massoretic text is ever to be driven from the assured position of supremacy which it has held since the days of Origen and of Jerome, it will only be when the great bulk of sober critics and the general intelligence of Biblical students have been convinced that a change is necessary. It is very doubtful whether such a change will ever be reached; but it is probable that increasing use will be made of the Septuagint evidence, and students will do well to keep an eye on it in their work on the Old Testament.

This is all very well, but the question should surely arise to Christians—what about "Our Lord's" habit of using the Septuagint when he wanted to quote the Old Testament? Did he not know it was lacking in "authority"? Or was it perhaps due to the fact that if there was a Hebrew Old Testament somewhere nobody knew anything about it—not even Jesus?

Old Testament problems will still, I venture to assert, occupy a very large part in Biblical study; it will take a long time before the last word is said about them—if ever.

Coming to the New Testament, Sir Frederic asserts "we pass from obscurity into a region of comparative light." It is well he uses the word "comparative." As a matter of fact, as soon as we get into the interminable discussion he gives us on the various texts of the New Testament we wonder exactly where the light shines. The truth is, as any reader of his book must see at once, the very greatest "obscurity" exists as to what is the "inspired" Word in the New Testament. All the great manuscripts are hopelessly at variance with one another, as well as with the lesser manuscripts. It is true that a good many of the variations are of a minor character, or are easily discovered errors of the transcribers—much as we get what are called "printer's errors" in printed books. But there are still a large number of very important "readings" to be accounted for, and here, as Sir Frederic carefully shows, manuscripts, editors and authorities are in a state of hopeless confusion. How can one account for the fact that God's Word has been left in such a mess?

Sir Frederic naturally does his best to give the earliest possible dates for the Gospels—quoting Harnack, as if Harnack was the last word on the problem. Harnack said the question of chronology was over. He said that the books of the New Testament were written between 50 A.D. and 100 A.D., and Sir Frederic makes the extraordinary statement that "recent discoveries have only confirmed this conclusion." It is a pity we are not given a clear account of these discoveries. All I can say they are not in the latest edition of *Our Bible and Ancient Manuscripts*. Assertions there are in plenty, but I have not seen one *answer* yet anywhere—and I have diligently sought such—to the position put by the author of *Supernatural Religion*, namely, that the four Gospels, as we have them, were unknown before somewhere about 150 A.D. Of course,

there were gospels and epistles, but not those as now found in the New Testament.

And as for a discussion on the "received" text of the New Testament, and the "Western" text, and the "neutral" text, and many other texts, the reader will find many pages in the book with a wealth of detail which, unless he is a close and careful student, he will find most bewildering. He will ask, and rightly ask, if God's Word could have been left in such an awful state. What more astonishing story is there in fiction than the monks, who had the leaves forming the famous *Sinaitic Codex* in their possession, using them as firepaper or something to wrap sandwiches in? The Catholic Church can well boast of guarding God's Precious Heritage, the Holy Bible, in view of this story and the way other precious manuscripts were used by monks to write their silly sermons.

But if one dismisses the theological or religious implications, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* will be found not only interesting as a study of Bible problems from the textual point of view, but a splendid description of the old and new manuscripts and printed copies and versions of the Bible. Here Sir Frederic Kenyon, who was the Director of the British Museum, is in his element, and he has, for all who are interested in the particular questions dealt with, written a fascinating work. Moreover the plates reproducing many photographs of the ancient manuscripts give an excellent idea of what they look like. And finally the reader will find in the Appendix some notable "various readings" which will come as a shock to a genuine Fundamentalist. Sir Frederic contends in his last word that "truth shall prevail." He should in this case have said Heresy.

H. CUTNER

Correspondence

A TRIBUTE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—The following is an excerpt, literatim, from a letter which I recently received from an old friend, a victim of Nazi persecution. He was forced to leave his home and business in Berlin and flee with his wife to France. There he succeeded in finding employment, but, when war came, he was interned.

"My dear old friend a few days after I have been liberated, and to tell the truth it has been a very hard time for me. My age and no doubt a splendid dossier have helped a lot. In the camp we had excellent food and as much to eat as we liked. The French officers are gentlemen and treated us as good as they could. But still freedom is freedom, and it was one of the happiest days of my life, as I got to know that I am free."

The French are brave; they are also chivalrous.

EDGAR SYERS

A DEAD DIET

SIR,—It is fitting that Mr. Wallace should quote Paul to justify a diet of dead animals, because the religious argument in favour of this diet is the only valid one.

Every witch-doctor knows that by eating a dead enemy we not only keep away his tribal spirits, but also gain his strength. Every priest preaches that by eating Jesus we keep away the Devil, and gain holiness. Similarly by eating beef we keep away all illnesses, and become as strong as a bull.

It is strange that eminent freethinkers still allow their daily diet to be planned by the fears and hopes of long dead religions. It is stranger still that they do not realize that each time they consume flesh they are performing a ceremony just as religious as the ceremony performed by

their simpler brethren who throw salt over their shoulders. And it is a tragedy that they should allow habit to blind them to the cruelty filth greed and waste which accompany this ceremony. Surely æsthetic economic or health reasons should weigh more with a Freethinker than religious casuistry, on such an important matter as diet?

A. BUNTING

[Letters from W. Gallacher, M.P., Major W. L. Roseveare and Miss Twynam are held over until next week.]

Obituary

JOHN PUGH

THE remains of John Pugh, of Newtown, were cremated at Birmingham on January 4. He joined the N.S.S. during the Presidency of G. W. Foote, and remained a member until his death at 72 years of age. He was a regular reader of the *Freethinker*, and always enthusiastic in the interests of the cause. He was a great admirer of the present President of the N.S.S., and in the past had often tramped over the mountains to hear Mr. Cohen lecture in Wales. To his widow and four children we offer sincere sympathy in their great loss. A Secular Service was conducted at the Crematorium by Mr. C. H. Smith, Secretary of the Birmingham Branch N.S.S.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cricketers' Arms, Inverness Street, near Camden Town Underground Station): 7.30, Debate—"Is Communism the Remedy" *Affir.*: Pat Dooley. *Neg.*: Mr. H. Preece.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandria Hotel, opposite Clapham Common Underground Station): 7.30,—A lecture.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BERKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, J. V. Short—"War."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton.

BURNLEY ESPERANTO SOCIETY (Westgate, Burnley): 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street): 7.0, Discussion—"Freewill versus Discussion." Muriel Whitefield and John Grant.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 3.0, Mr. R. H. Rosetti—"The World, Religion and Unbelief."

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The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators:—

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It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, R. H. ROSETTI, 68 FARRINGTON STREET, LONDON, E.C.4.

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