

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions

### Freethought and the B.B.C.

In a recent issue of *John O'London's Weekly*, Mr. Robert Lynd has an article on "Objectionable Jokes." We agree with him that whether a joke is objectionable or not depends upon time and place. Any kind of a joke would be objectionable in the case of a man suffering from a severe family bereavement, and one may easily picture numerous situations in which a joke would be out of place. So far one may agree with Mr. Lynd. But in the course of his article he perpetrates a joke that is really out of place—in an article on objectionable jokes. The curious thing is that he goes out of his way to do so. It has no reference to what has gone before and nothing to do with what follows. It is just pitchforked in, and might even excuse the suspicion that Mr. Lynd's article was written in order to get in these two paragraphs. In that case we would suggest that Mr. Lynd's sense of humour leaves much to be desired, for while there is nothing in it that to anyone would suggest a joke, it is decidedly objectionable from the point of view of common sense and a sense of justice. It is after writing two out of three columns that Mr. Lynd suddenly introduces the question of the B.B.C. and its religious policy. And he then becomes very solemn, so solemn that one might almost believe that he imagines himself attending the funeral of his own reputation for humour.

Mr. Lynd says "it is as important to keep B.B.C. broadcasts from giving offence as it is to keep B.B.C. religion from giving offence." I do not know whether B.B.C. religion is considered by him as a species of humour, but in any case I am quite sure when the B.B.C. serves up a Roman Catholic service it does give offence to Christians of the Kensitite type, and that some of its other religious services offend Christians of a different denomination. And if any of these sects were permitted to preach what they really believe in the shape of specific doctrines, there would be what one may call a very "holy" row. As it is

each of these speakers hides a great many things in the way of religion, that he not only believes, but which he also believes is the kernel of "true" religion. These speakers do not give the whole of what they believe, but they do believe in adding one more to the many fakes of the B.B.C. in order to get the advertisement the microphone gives them. If these Christian preachers were to say all they believe there would be great offence given and a devil of a row would follow. Actually these preachers have different gods, different doctrines and different standards of religious rectitude. They do not have a row, because they dealt in general amiabilities and refrain from saying anything that is religiously definite.

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### The Non-Controversial Sham

With a delightful air of tolerance where the question is not tolerance but justice, Mr. Lynd says "I have no objection to controversy, but Broadcast House is not the place for it." Well, will Mr. Lynd be good enough to tell us, first, what is there in the whole world that is more controversial than religion, and, second, is it not controversial when preacher after preacher, and parson after parson, are permitted to dwell upon the point that ordinary common decency and the common virtues of humanity, are impossible without belief in a god? Mr. Lynd must know that religious questions have been debated for thousands of years, that they have been temporarily settled only in the sense that Hitler settles disputes between himself and the Poles or the Czechs. Religion is the most debatable thing in the world. It is the one thing that divides people in a way that no other subject does. We are bringing men from India to-day who will fight side by side with Englishmen and Frenchmen for the defeat of Germany. But attempt to compel them to attend a Christian service, or join in Christian prayers, and then see what will happen. The common human bond between the whole of a people of even the same country is not religion, but those human and social qualities which the self-interested preachers of the B.B.C. say is impossible without them and their doctrines. Mr. Lynd appears to be under the impression that a subject ceases to be debatable when the other side is prevented from being heard. So does Hitler. I can, however, assure Mr. Lynd that a controversial subject remains a controversial subject whether it comes to us over the air, in a book, or from a lecture platform. Muzzling the other side does not mean agreement. Not even the hypocrisy of Sir John Reith has been able to eliminate these facts. Mr. Lynd says that B.B.C. religion seems suited to its purpose. I agree. But the purpose is radically dishonest, and that if it is so is part of the indictment.

Let anyone consider the following passage, pitchforked into an article on objectionable jokes:—



I think those people are wrong who maintain that in accordance with the principle of free speech Freethinkers and Atheists ought to be allowed to have their say on the wireless as well as Christians.

In point of fact Freethinkers and Atheists are not excluded from the wireless. All that happens is that, like Christian broadcasters, they are not invited to take part in religious controversy. . . . I do not see why an Atheist should be allowed to attack Christianity through the microphone any more than a Presbyterian should be allowed to attack the doctrine of Adult Baptism.

This is very, very weak. As a matter of fact non-belief in religion is being continuously attacked on the air, and only the other Sunday a series of lectures was commenced by a parson who spent the whole of his time trying to demonstrate that without God duty and honesty and all the rest of the chief virtues have no meaning. Not even that narrow-minded bigot, Sir John Reith, could wish for better than this, or could he invent a defence farther from the truth than that offered by Mr. Lynd. I believe Mr. Lynd is occasionally hired by the B.B.C. to talk about new books. On the next occasion will he take the opportunity of trying to talk about some new book *against* religion and commend its reading? If he does he will see what kind of equality prevails at the B.B.C. where religion is concerned. Mr. Lynd must be curiously unaware of the history of the B.B.C. if he does not know that from the outset one of its chief objects has been, as distinctly stated in one of its year-books, to prevent the disintegration of the Christian religion.

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#### Religious Truth

What does Mr. Lynd mean by saying that "Freethinkers and Atheists are not excluded from the wireless"? That is literally true, but it is nevertheless, taken with its context, deliberately false. Of course, Atheists and Freethinkers have spoken, and do speak, for the B.B.C. To prevent this being done would have meant shutting out a large number of eminent names. But they are not permitted to speak as Atheists and Freethinkers, and they are not permitted to offer a criticism of religion that is comparable in form or force to the liberty given religious speakers. There is liberty to attack unbelief, but none to attack religion. A few years ago, on the occasion of the Thomas Paine centenary the B.B.C. was asked to permit a broadcast dealing with one of the most notable men of his day, one who was honoured in America, in France, and, save in clerical and official circles, in Britain. A reply was made that the suggestion would receive consideration. Later, when the matter was again pressed, it was stated that the programme of anniversaries was so full that no room could be found. Then it was suggested that ten minutes might be given in one of the casual talks. Even that could not pass the six foot odd of bigotry that was pitchforked from a Mause into a responsible public position. And Mr. Lynd says there is no unfairness!

Look at the B.B.C. control of Sunday. That day is completely dominated by religion. The religious Committee—under the command of Reith—decided that on Sunday nothing should be done seriously to disturb the narcotizing, religious atmosphere of that day. Children are dosed with religion, and the programme is designed so that the religious tone shall not be much interfered with. And during the religious service the general public must have that or nothing. Over and over again the B.B.C. which has lied—also over and over again—concerning the number of people who have protested against this sectarian monopoly of Sunday—has been challenged to take a plebiscite over a selected area as to the desire for an alternative

programme on Sunday. It has been refused. The B.B.C. went on with its religious policy. It has had debates on various subjects, but never one on religion. Still Mr. Lynd sees no wrong in these men who thus abuse a public trust in the interests of the Churches.

Finally, Mr. Lynd says there are plenty of halls and journals in which religious controversies can be carried on. The poor innocent! Is he really so simple as not to know that there are scores of towns in which, while plenty of halls are open for religious propaganda, the principal ones are closed to Freethinkers? And how many journals is Mr. Lynd acquainted with that permit an open discussion on religion? There are many faked discussions, but how many genuine ones are there? Finally, Mr. Lynd remarks that if Freethinkers and Atheists do not like what is given them on the wireless they can switch off. That, we beg to say, is not argument. It is sheer impertinence. For Mr. Lynd's benefit—he is evidently in need of the instruction—we may say that democracy, real democracy, of which we hear so much but experience little, does not depend wholly upon a voting franchise, increased wages, better food or better housing. It is dependent upon complete freedom of thought and speech and equality of education. With these things a man may be a man for all that. Without them we may have, as we have to-day, a very widespread snobocracy, a practical denial of the social equality of man, a very active oligarchy but no genuine democracy. Mr. Lynd should think of these things. At any rate he should not touch upon them until he has done so.

CHAPMAN COHEN

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## The Hardy Centenary

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Care I for the limb, the thews, the stature, bulk, and big assemblage of a man? Give me the spirit, Master Shallow.—*Shakespeare*.

EVEN in the present troublous times it is good to give a thought to the centenary of the birth of that bright and particular genius, Thomas Hardy. Just as certainly as Dickens is our greatest novelist, so surely has Hardy proved his position, both as poet and novelist, by work that lifts him far above his late-Victorian rivals. That this eulogy is deserved is proved by the bare fact that on Hardy's eighty-first birthday one hundred and six representative younger writers presented a birthday address of congratulation, together with a first edition of Keats's *Lamia*. It was well and happily done, for the veteran was then the greatest living writer using the English language.

Such a proud position was only won after many years of labour. His first published novel, *Desperate Remedies*, dated as far back as the "Seventies" of the last century. His reputation grew steadily, until he occupied an almost Olympian position, above praise or blame. And what a splendid range of novels stands to his credit. Indeed, in his knowledge of "the Concrete Unknowable," Hardy is as true and wide as Shakespeare, and as modern as Meredith. Over all his works, too, is sown the most rare ironical humour. Not one of his rustics, of his working-folk, but has a pleasant originality, a native pleasantry, and a cast of drollery. There is depth in his irony, too; it is not a mere sneeze of the reason. In one of the greatest of his novels, *The Return of the Native*, the chapter in which he introduces the characters bears the heading, "Humanity appears on the scene hand-in-hand with trouble." In his masterpiece, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, the story of a woman who was



hanged, the sub-title is "A Pure Woman," and the awful tragedy is summed up by the author's grim comment:—

"Justice" was done, and the President of the Immortals, in Æschylean phrase, had ended his sport with Tess.

A master of language, Hardy rent his critics when they attacked him for his Freethought. He referred to the gentlemen of the press, who had "turned Christian for half an hour," in order to write their diatribes. Hardy was years ahead of his own time, but, it must be remembered, his audience was originally formed from the circulating libraries, a class that does not readily assimilate new or progressive ideas. He needed a far different atmosphere, and he did not get it until he left novel-writing behind, and turned to poetry. Then a bewildered reading-public realized that a deservedly favourite writer was actually leading a revolution against the Cocksure Orthodoxy of his age. Hardy did not approve of Mrs. Grundy, even in her Sunday satin; he doubted the idea of progress as a Cook's Excursion through the Generations; Utopias seemed to him as unreal as pantomime transformation scenes. To him Nature was no indulgent mother, but "red in tooth and claw." "Omar Khayyam" must have appealed to him far more than "In Memoriam."

Critics insisted on Hardy's Fatalism in season and out of season. Of course, he was a pessimist, just as Browning was an optimist; just as white is not black, and day is not night. But it was not the posing of Byron, nor the melancholy of Chateaubriand. It was rather the tragic attitude of James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*. If both these great writers lifted the veil of Isis, and found beneath it, not a benevolent Mother of Men, but the tomb of an illusion, they had a panacea which neither Byron nor Leopardi dreamed of—resignation.

What an artist Hardy was! If his short stories had been written by Continental authors, they would have been acclaimed to the skies. They approach perfection as anything by Daudet or Maupassant, and reveal as delicate and faultless work as any Russian or Scandinavian writer. On a larger canvas he was as magnificent as Leonardo da Vinci. Where in all contemporary literature is there nobler work than in the poignant scene of the bridal night in *Tess*, or that other showing the dying Jude and the choristers; or the quiet figure of the bereaved girl in the closing scene of the "Woodlanders," as wonderful a piece of art as Millet's painting of the "Angelus"? In each of these is struck the consummate, tragic note, as in old Æschylus and our own Shakespeare. They wring the heart almost like personal experience. For they are life itself sublimed by passing through an imagination of uncommon force.

The attentive reader cannot fail to note the essential pity enshrined in these admirable novels, poems and stories. Even in those earlier books, amid their picturesque colour, their rustic atmosphere, their pastoral scents and sounds, we find a frank and free sympathy with suffering humanity. As the author advances in reputation, and grows in intellectual power, the note deepens, until, in *Tess*, it grows into a cry of defiance, and, finally, in *Jude the Obscure*, a great sob of pain. He says to the sufferer with the gentle Shakespeare, whom he quotes on the title-page of *Tess*:—

Poor, wounded soul,  
My bosom as a bed shall lodge thee.

If, however, humanity is limned against a remorseless background, it offers the consolation of the companionship of those human beings who are also beleagued.

Hardy's poetry is "caviare to the general," but it is as great a challenge to Convention as was that of Swinburne. His poetic masterpiece, *The Dynasts*, alone would have made the reputation of a lesser man. And, be it noted, his lyrical verse has the same intellectual outlook as his prose. Hardy was quieter in the attack on Giant Custom than the fiery and impassioned Swinburne, but his sword was as sharp. He reminds us of the Marquis Villalobar, the Spanish Ambassador to Belgium in the Great War, Replying to a bullying, volleying German martinet, Villalobar, who knew German fluently, said, icily, in French: "Pardon, I do not understand you. Speak slowly, politely—and in French." It was singularly effective, and it was also Hardy's way. Small wonder that Hardy was a little scornful of his Fleet Street critics. A great writer, he carried the fame of the West Country all over the English-speaking world. A great man, his sympathies were always on the side of the "under dog." Of him it may be said:—

Fate gave what chance shall not control;  
His sad lucidity of soul.

We do well to salute the memory of such a man, who carried the torch of his genius into that vast world of imagination, and illuminated it anew.

MIMNERMUS

## The Recollections of a Man of Science

WITH his *Memories of Eighty Years*, the late Dr. John Beddoe, F.R.S., the distinguished ethnologist, presented an outline of a well-spent life. Few, if any, notes were at his disposal when recording his reminiscences, but with a fine undimmed memory such as his, Dr. Beddoe was able to recall the leading episodes of his long and busy life. It is somewhat regrettable, however, that in this charming autobiography so little is said concerning eminent friends still living at the time of its publication, especially as these included many of the leading lights of science.

Of Shropshire stock, even as a boy Beddoe displayed those remarkable powers of observation which attended him through life, thus materially assisting him in his craniological and other anthropological researches. Owing to indifferent health his school instruction was intermittent. Still, Hume's *History*, Milman's *History of the Jews*, Mosheim's *Ecclesiastical History*, and, above all, the immortal Waverley Novels solaced his waiting hours. In 1845 he was installed in a solicitor's office, and in the following railway-mania-year he was deputed to examine the plans of the lines then projected "in every part of England, with scarcely any consideration of the chance of their ever paying interest on their cost." At this period Beddoe visited the Manxmen on whose island he noted the following sign outside an inn on the road between Douglas and Castle Rushen which ran thus:—

I'm Abraham Low, just half-way up the hill,  
And when I'm at the top, what's funnier still,  
I yet am Low. Come in and take a swill  
Of Ale, Gin, Rum or Brandy, what you will!  
Come in and take a drop! No further go!  
My charges and myself are always Low.

Beddoe now decided to forsake law for medicine as a career, and consulted the eminent practitioner, Sir Charles Hastings, who repeated the proverb that a physician "does not get bread until he has no teeth wherewith to eat it." But the die was cast and Beddoe entered University College in London to take a medical degree. Graham the renowned chemist and



Sharpey the famous physiologist were then in their prime, and the presence of such men would naturally stimulate a student bent on medical distinction.

Examinations have been extolled as the triumph of educational testing. But Herbert Spencer's pertinent inquiry: "Who is to examine the examiners?" has never been satisfactorily met. When preparing to take the Baccalaureate of Arts, Beddoe was asked whether he was familiar with trigonometry, and he frankly confessed his unacquaintance with the subject: "Then you will be plucked for certain, he was told. So Beddoe went to Holywell Street, then the great mart for second-hand books, and purchased a trigonometrical text book. He then carefully compared it with the examination questions for the previous decade. "I made up my mind," he says, "that there were propositions which were favourites of the examiner and of which one at least was always set. I learned all these perfectly, neglecting all beside them. When in due course the paper came before us there were in it three propositions, and two of these were two of my four."

Beddoe passed in the first division and naturally thought the examiner deplorably incompetent. Having gone through the medical schools, Beddoe applied for a post on an independent medical staff then deemed essential, to supplement and relieve the meagre band of overworked doctors attending the troops engaged in the Crimean War. Their departure was greatly delayed, and the services of the auxiliary doctors were badly needed in the severe winter of 1854. Beddoe, and several physicians and surgeons who lived to become famous, received appointments. According to custom, the War Office was muddling the campaign, and the evils of this procedure were aggravated by the miserable jealousies of the official departments concerned. Dr. Beddoe sums up the conclusions of the doctors in these terms: "That things relating to the war would never go right till the War Office was burnt down, and if a few of the clerks were inside at the time, it would be ever so much the better. I never fully appreciated the phrase 'Red Tape' till I had crept through the passages of the War Office, between piles of dusty papers heaped up higher than one's head, all tied with red tape. Once we wasted hours in searching for a document which was thought absolutely indispensable by the officials, and which was ultimately discovered in a waste-paper basket between the legs of the chief."

The official military medicos in the Crimea were far from friendly in their attitude towards the newcomers. Better paid and more favourably situated than the other doctors who also had been the victims of insensate bureaucracy, the resentment of the latter was natural enough. The Principal Medical Officer at Scutari was a gruff character who ignored the existence of these interlopers, as he considered the new arrivals. At Brusa a serious earthquake with great loss of life had recently occurred, and Beddoe having a few idle hours was anxious to view the scene of the disaster. So he applied to this military doctor to grant him leave of absence. The answer was laconic: "I have nothing to do with you, Dr. Beddoe, you may go to the devil if you like." Beddoe replied that he only wanted to go as far as Brusa.

Even in those days the profane language of the English abroad was proverbial in the Near East. One of the Greeks informed Beddoe that: "Me speak ver' good Englees, sarr." "Then," continues the doctor, "followed a volley of the foulest and most injurious curses ever coined in Wapping, directed at an uncomprehending neighbour. Then to me again with a sweet smile, 'Ver' good Englees, sarr.'"

Unlike the temperate Turks, the Christian Greeks employed as carpenters and labourers relished intoxi-

cants. Dr. Brunton expressed his disgust of their conduct by saying: "They are mostly drunk on Sunday and on Monday I don't expect them. Tuesday they may put in a fair amount of work, but on Wednesday they're all getting ready for the feast-day on Thursday; and on the feast-day they get so drunk that they are of little use on Friday; and Saturday's a half-holiday."

Beddoe's experiences caused him to form a very favourable opinion of the Turks, who to him were by no means unspeakable. While learning Turkish, Beddoe's Moslem instructor inquired concerning Protestantism and the doctor explained the tenets of evangelicalism to his interrogator. "It seems a very decent sort of religion," said the Turk, "There are just two things about it I don't like. One is that you pay no respect to our prophet; the other is the doctrine of the Trinity, which you will excuse my saying is bosh."

Beddoe, who was obviously himself a Freethinker, had the fortune to meet that sturdy sceptic, Sir Richard Burton, who had led a party of Afghan horsemen through Persia and Anatolia. "Fine, hardy looking swarthy fellows they were, and their commander looked very like them. I do not wonder," continues Beddoe, "that he chose to pass as an Afghan when he made his famous pilgrimage to Mecca. His talk was quiet, modest, and full of value."

When the Crimean War ended Beddoe travelled extensively in Europe. On his return to England he settled in Bristol—a city celebrated as a centre of intellectual culture—as a medical practitioner. This was a very venturesome enterprise, as Bristol was amply provided with eminent doctors and Beddoe had a hard struggle. Yet, in later years, Dr. Long Fox and he became the leading physicians in Bristol. While attached to a dispensary in his struggling days a patient exhibiting the symptoms of mild delirium tremens, under examination proved to be a persistent smoker of strong tobacco, but a very infrequent consumer of alcohol. The man renounced his pipe, and for a time recovered, when the old trouble returned. Beddoe accused his patient of having relapsed into smoking, but this both he and his wife positively denied. Then the wife said: "We had a long talk, sir, about what you was so kind as to tell us; and he resolved that he never would smoke no more and so, sir, he has taken to chewing instead."

Dr. Wolff, the Bokhara celebrity, told Beddoe a number of interesting stories, and one among them related to the attempt of the Roman Propaganda to convert the devotees of John the Baptist at Bassora, when the Catholic missionary eagerly announced his success to Rome. But the priest soon saw clear evidences of backsliding, and he indignantly demanded an explanation. The supposed converts explained that their adoption of Catholicism carried reservations: "Firstly, that you give us a handsome gratuity; secondly, that you get the Turkish Government to reduce our taxes; thirdly, that we shall be allowed to practise all the rites of our own religion, as well as yours; and fourthly, that no priest of your religion shall be present with any of us when he dies." In high displeasure, the priest promptly packed up and returned to Rome.

During his ethnological expeditions in Ireland Beddoe met several men of mark. Among these were Bernard Davis, Dr. Stokes, the noted physician, and the father of the gifted author of *Dorian Gray*, Sir William Wilde. Beddoe, remarks that while Wilde was a loyal antiquary, "Speranza" (Lady Wilde) was a "rampant rebel." Also, that when Thomas Davis was charged during his trial for treason with the authorship of a certain seditious song, she rose in the



gallery and exclaimed, "in her rich contralto, 'Davis never wrote that song, I wrote it.'"

Dr. Stokes was a born anecdote collector, and his story of McCraw's cattle was one of the best. McCraw was a Protestant cattle-farmer, and many of his live-stock succumbed to the plague. Nothing stayed its ravages until, at last, McCraw's Catholic herdsman ventured to recommend his master to avail himself of the prayers of the priest. McCraw, however, damned the herdsman and his Popish priest as well. But the cattle went on dying and the cowman again suggested the assistance of the Holy Church. McCraw now proved more amenable, and the priest was approached and agreed to pray for the cattle on payment of five pounds. The money was paid and the murrain quickly abated and no more cattle perished.

Shortly afterwards the Anglican rector was riding to church service accompanied by McCraw, but when they came to the spot where the roads diverged, the rector was surprised to see his parishioner turn the wrong way. "No, no, minister," replied the farmer, "I was born a Protestant, and I'll die a Protestant: But I'll tell you what, minister, Popery may be a damned bad religion for Christians, but its fine for the cattle."

Among Beddoe's scientific contemporaries, Virchow, Owen, Lord Avebury, Thomas Huxley and others, figure in his pages, while Beddoe's own classic the *Races of Britain*, still the standard work on the ethnology of our island, entitles him to a place of honour among the scientific celebrities of his time.

T. F. PALMER

## Fear! Humanity's Curse

FEAR is the Father of War!

Fear is the mainstay of Medicine.

Fear is the cradle of Religion.

In every age, in every clime, Fear has shadowed Man!

From the earliest dawn of Humanity, through all its tortuous evolution, Man has never been free from fear.

His Gods, his Devils, his evil spirits, have been born of his fears.

The Sun, the moon, the stars, the flash of lightning, the crash of thunder, the hurricane, the angry sea, the torrential rain, the avalanche, even the serene beauty of the rainbow, all have been causes for Man's fears.

His dreams, the silent dead, the darkness, and the unknown in all its dread shapes, have been infested with his fears.

Even to-day, whilst Science has dispelled most of Man's superstitions, when the fearsome Gods and Demons have fled into the fastnesses of space, beyond the reach of Truth's Telescope, when the fears born of Man's atavism have been exercised by the advance of knowledge, Man still has fears that manacle his mind, tear with discord his heartstrings—and keep his medicine-men labouring overtime.

Sir James Fraser, in *The Golden Bough*, a searching review of the evolution of the world-wide superstitions of Mankind, says, "Imagination acts upon Man as really as does gravitation, and may kill as surely as a dose of prussic acid."

### *Religion Trades in Fear*

We have only to look around at the lives of men and women to-day to realize that whilst the fears that Religion, and particularly Christianity, have fostered and traded in are dying, yet men and women are search-

ing for new hypotheses on which to lay the fears that still haunt their minds as demonology did in the dark yesterdays.

Some well-purposed people are endeavouring to cleanse and purge Christianity of its Devils and evil spirits, its Purgatory, its Hell, and its eternal punishments for those who refuse to credit its creeds.

They are labelling these "Bible truths" as allegory, but they must remember that the sphere of allegory is spacious, and will hold not only Christianity's demonology, but also its dreams, its miracles, its virgin birth, with all its presumptions of inspired knowledge outside human experience, as well as the other pious opinions that this Oriental Mythology has sought to rivet on the minds of Men and Women—and even children.

### *Listen to Mark Twain*

Thus does that great humanitarian, Mark Twain, say of the cruelty of Christianity and its creeds:—

It mouths Justice! yet it invented Hell!

It mouths Charity, yet it invented Hell!

It mouths Mercy, yet it invented Hell!

And brave Bobbie Burns, who lived in days dangerous for free expression, said: "The fear of Hell is the Hangman's Whip."

### *The Disease of Fear*

Turning to to-day! Mr. Douglas Hay-Scott, Scientist and Psychologist, says:—

Thou shalt not! is the main theme of the Ten Commandments of the Christian Religion. And if thou dost!—ghastly unending torture, an afterlife of eternal pain and suffering.

The Bible-bangers iterate, "The fear of God is the beginning of Wisdom." Rather it is the end! For, ever behind orthodox religion lurks the sinister shadow—hardly one of us is immune from its influence. Humanity for twenty centuries and more has been suckled on fearsome myths; heredity reflects them. Oftentimes as legacies of the past they arise in our present-day minds, causing a chronic distressing malady—the disease of fear.

### *How Religion Poisons the Minds of Children*

Here is an extract from a religious tract for children. It shows how the cruelty of dreadful fear is sown in the mentality of our little ones. The Reverend Father Furness writes:—

Look at that girl! What a terrible dress she has on; it is made of fire. She wears a bonnet of fire which is pressed down all over her head. See! she is on fire from head to foot. If she were here, she would be burnt in a moment, but she is in Hell, where fire burns but does not kill.

Look at that boy! Listen! There is a sound like a boiling kettle. What does it mean? It means this: the blood is boiling in the boy's veins; the brains are boiling in his head; the marrow is boiling in his bones.

Hear how that baby screams! See how it twists itself about! It beats its head against the roof of the oven. It stamps its little feet upon the flood. On its face is an expression of the most appalling despair.

This dreadful fear-poison was circulated to children in our own times, and the wretched fearmonger who wrote it should have been put in the nearest mental hospital.

Recently a patient at Auckland Hospital sent me a tract which some religious organization had distributed to sufferers there. It was headed, "Prepare to Meet thy God!" and depicted the eternal fiery punish-



ment that would be the readers' if they did not "accept Christ," and also promised them the eternal bliss of crawling on Abraham's bosom "à la Lazarus" if they would "lay their sins on their Saviour."

The mental hospitals are crowded! The medical profession is centred on troubles affecting the mind. More and more it is being recognized that fear leading to unhappiness is incompatible with bodily fitness and physical health.

#### *Doctors and Fear-Disease*

Science has a grip on most of the fundamental destructive diseases, but what about the majority of patients to the doctors' consulting-rooms, who have no evidence of organic disease, yet who feel desperately ill—marooned in fear?

Visit the reception-rooms of a busy doctor. Who are there? You find a woman is to have a baby and is desperate with fear at the prospect. A little thin man with nervous dyspepsia because his business is drooping and his wife is a social climber, who refuses to economise! The full-blooded housemaid who has given in to her instincts for once, and is now sleepless with terror. Or the young woman who has become a chain-smoker with frayed nerves, whose mother is sure her morning cough is a sign of consumption. Later, when they have been examined and given a tonic mixture—or other "bottle"—(which the British Minister of Health states "is so frequently extraneous") they feel relieved because they have parked their fears and mental burdens on the doctor.

#### *The Harvest of Fear*

This neurotic weakness of occidental civilization today is in a large measure the harvest that has come from the seeds of fear sown by Christianity for the last two thousand years. Its priests have ceaselessly hammered their hell, with its fire and brimstone, into the minds of the people, using as a salve for the fears they have themselves created their imaginary Heaven.

The Churches have sold their fears and hopes wrapped in emotional services, of music, pictures, incense and ritual, with moaning litanies, prayers, and sobbing sermons. They have poisoned the minds of men, women and children with their creeds.

By alleged divine inspiration and revelation they have pretended to hold the keys to the next world. You must believe and be baptized, for did not their Christ say, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved—but he that believeth not shall be damned"—"Depart from Me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the Devil and his angels?"

But despite all the efforts of the Churches, Humanity is slowly awakening from its religious narcotic.

#### *Truth is on the March.*

Science, with its Astronomy, Biology, Philology, Historical Research, and Psychology, has unmasked Christianity, shown it to be but the mythology of a small Palestine tribe—a mythology mostly built up from the older superstitions of Chaldea, Persia and Egypt.

Beyond death, the Churches have built their hypotheses of Heaven and Hell, and pretended they possess the keys to both. They have traded their promissory notes, payable in their theological hereafter for the realities of this world.

Ah! take the cash in hand and waive the rest!  
Oh, the brave music of a distant drum!

For those who refuse to buy the "very desirable lots" in their paradise, and take the clergy's promissory notes for delivery, there are threats of fire and brimstone.

#### *Religion's Racketeers*

The pretence that Parsons and Priests possess inspired knowledge of alleged things outside human experience has been the biggest racket ever put over Man.

The Pope, the Priest, the Parson, knows just as much of the alleged next world as the clodhopper who scares the crows from the fields—and that is nothing!

Despite all their ceremonies of booming organs, of chanting choirs, of jewelled vestments, with which they are laid in their graves, these proud ecclesiastics are just as dead and silent as the poor aboriginal buried in his shroud of leaves

Why, all the Saints and Sages who discussed  
Of the Two Worlds so learnedly, are thrust  
Like foolish Prophets forth their words to scorn  
Are scattered, and their mouths are stopt with Dust.

From across the dark Styx comes no sound save the echoes of Man's own hopes and fears.

HENRY J. HAYWARD

## Common Sense and Inspector Hornleigh

"INSPECTOR HORNLEIGH" is the gentleman who, in Monday Night at Eight, on the air, spots the person who did the murder or committed the burglary. In these imaginative episodes he, being gifted by exceptional powers of observation coupled with a keen ear for the "slip" in cross-examination, never fails to "bag" the criminal in a few minutes. The other week he found his man from a circumstance deduced from what was, in his opinion, a simple common-sense physical law. This was that in the case of a man and a rope falling from a given point at the same time, the rope being the lighter of the two objects would reach the ground some time after the body. This did not agree with the statement made on cross-examination by one of the suspected parties, with the result that that unfortunate person had to give, in his own person, an experimental case of the law of falling bodies. Justice was done, we were asked to conclude, when Inspector Hornleigh had ended his sport. It might have been; for the real criminal has often been hanged for wrong reasons, but that does not alter the fact that Inspector Hornleigh's deduction was incorrect and the poor fellow had a "raw deal." It is good to think that Hornleigh's adventures belong to the realm of pure fiction. Otherwise there would have been many tears shed for the unlucky chap, and youngsters engaged in School, poring over the first pages of their Elementary Dynamics, would have been particularly indignant.

But, if the censor will allow me to state, even Scotland Yard may make mistakes, and Hornleigh erred in good company. Aristotle (384-322 B.C.), similarly using his wits, wits of no small order, came to a similar conclusion—and Aristotle was indeed a name to conjure with. Aristotle held that the time taken by a falling body to reach a given distance was affected by the weight of the body. A 20-pound weight released from the hand from a state of what is known as "at rest," would reach the earth more quickly than a weight of 10 pounds. Aristotle, as has been said, was a name to conjure with; he spoke with authority, so much so that for nearly two thousand years (or, in other words, for a period equal to the "Christian Era") this matter was considered as good as settled. "Common Sense" had gained another of its typical victories.



Then came Galileo (1564-1642 A.D.). As Mr. H. G. Wells points out in his *Short History of the World*, Galileo was no gentleman. He had little respect for authorities. He lived in Pisa, and the sight of the famous Leaning Tower put ideas into his head. He said, "Let's try this out!" He was not the first to doubt the truth of Aristotle's law, *but no one had ever thought of putting it to the test*. It is an interesting speculation as to whether even Galileo would have done so and put the "law" to crucial experiment, if the convenient angle of the Leaning Tower for such a test had not been forced daily upon his attention. He ascended the tower carrying a couple of weights of differing magnitudes, released them and discovered, as he had expected, that they reached the earth at the same time. "Experiment" as an essential part of Science came triumphantly into its own.

Galileo had difficulty in getting some of his scientific colleagues even to witness the experiments. The dead hand of Aristotle weighed heavily upon them. Besides, Galileo's conclusions were against *common-sense*. Galileo was to experience the same thing later when he discovered by the aid of the telescope that he had perceived Jupiter's Moons and the Ring of Saturn, and thus gave indirectly convincing support to the Copernican "Theory." In a letter of his to Kepler dated August 19, 1610, after referring to the extraordinary stupidity of the multitude, he continues:—

What do you say to the leading philosophers of the faculty here, to whom I have offered a thousand times of my own accord to show my studies, but who with the lazy obstinacy of a serpent who has eaten his fill has never consented to look at planets, nor moon, nor telescope? Verily, just as serpents close their ears so do these men close their eyes to the light of truth. These are great matters; yet they do not occasion me any surprise. People of this sort think that philosophy is a kind of book like the *Aeneid* or the *Odyssey*, and that the truth is to be sought, not in the universe, not in nature, but (I use their own words) *by comparing texts!* How you would laugh if you heard what things the first philosopher of the faculty at Pisa brought against me in the presence of the Grand Duke, for he tried, now with logical arguments, now with magical adjurations, to tear down and argue the new planets out of heaven.

Personal vanity, love of reputation, laziness of mind, and love of comfort, are some of the personal attributes always liable to insert themselves into a scientific mood and method. This temper is much more important to Science than the rightness or wrongness of any given hypothesis. Besides, Scientists are, admittedly, men, and therefore fallible, but when we have the infallible *text*, God's Revelation, telling man where he comes on and gets off scientifically, then Scientific progress is braked indeed. This Galileo was emphatically to find out. Pious conclaves met. Elegantly attired jumping-jacks trotted out their *texts*; pieces of scarlet were waved and the dear old hero of Science was made to suffer every mental and moral torture they knew well how to apply, and the progress of truth obstructed.

One must be on one's guard in using the term Common Sense. Often it is just an attempt to short-circuit a conclusion which should in its own right enjoy the process of calm thought and laborious experimentation. A definition of common-sense might perhaps be devised which would bring about the same results as would the indispensable, patient, truth-loving attributes of science. But, if and when we have arrived at this definition, the word will have lost its chief merit for it is because the use of common-sense is supposed to cut out these troublesome qualities that it enjoys to such a great extent the popularity it does.

T. H. ELSTON

## Acid Drops

The Belisha bubble was blown, it soared high, and it collapsed. Its political aspect does not concern us here, except to say that no one will easily place reliance on the Prime Minister's explanation, or his repudiation of anything operative in the shape of a cabal. One sentence used by the late Minister for War was significant, and really gave the game away. He said he never imagined that he would give offence by trying to democratize an army that was fighting for a democracy. That at all events was one of his real offences. And an apt comment came almost simultaneously with the news that privates in the army are not to take meals with their friends in the same hotels as officers. Behaviour has nothing to do with this, it is simply a case of class distinction, and in defence it is claimed that discipline cannot be maintained if that kind of thing is permitted. Officers must be treated as a race apart. They may be good to their men, they may look after their comfort, they—the officers—may be as decent as any educated and intelligent private, but in social intercourse they must be kept at a distance. We daresay that a private taking his soup while standing at attention would create a laugh at one or both of the performers. And to laugh together is to be human together.

It is said that discipline cannot be maintained, nor can the respect of men for officers continue if the familiarity of dining in the same hotel is permitted. That is all rubbish. If a man can command respect, he will get it from his fellows, whether they are both privates, both officers, or officers *and* privates. Respect, real respect, is not a matter of rank at all, it is a question of personality and worth. It is the man who cannot command respect who must have an imitation of it, and in that case he usually mistakes a forced obedience for respect. This state of things is not peculiar to the army; it is to be found in all branches of life—in business, in social intercourse, in schools, in the factories. It is partly due to a lack of self-respect in the person who demands this mechanical pretence of respect, it certainly owes much of its existence to a weakness in those who mistake an imitation for the real thing.

One officer explained in a newspaper interview that in Bedford—we think—while the hotel in which the officers dined had been placed out of bounds for the men, another hotel had been placed within bounds for them. The poor creature! He didn't even have intelligence enough to see that it was not because there was no place to go that a complaint was raised, but because officers and men were treated as distinct types of human beings who must not be allowed to mix. It was an offence to a common humanity against which the protest was made. And one thing is certain. While this sort of thing obtains we should give up all pretence of being a democracy. We are not, neither are we fighting to preserve a democracy. We are, or ought to be, fighting for the freedom to create a democracy in a country which is honeycombed by anti-democratic habits and institutions, in which, with parties ranging from present-day Communists to hard-shell Conservatives, the individual is counted as subordinate to a party or a class. Unless as an aftermath of this war we are nearer a democracy than we are to-day, the war will largely be fought in vain.

We don't know how many times we have quoted Palmerston's alleged advice to his Cabinet, that it didn't matter how many lies they told so long as they always told the same lie. Here is the *Tablet*, in common with other religious papers, telling us at one moment that Russia is an Atheistic country, and therefore whatever it does that anyone may object to is a consequence of Atheism, and the next moment assuring us that there are 20,000 registered religious bodies in Russia. That is not acting up to Palmerston's sensible counsel. Probably all that the *Tablet* really means is that there is no State religion in Russia. Another complaint is that the Moscow radio is used to broadcast Atheism. Will anyone be good



enough to tell us what is the difference between Moscow broadcasting Atheism, and our B.B.C. broadcasting religion in London? There is a lot of talk about justice and democracy to-day. An essential part of both is complete freedom of thought and speech, but in England and elsewhere the amount of freedom of expression for anti-Christianity is substantially the quantity that Christians are unable to prevent.

The Vicar of Gateshead complains that the children are letting down the Church, or rather, as he says, the parents are not seeing to it that in due season their children come to Church and Sunday School. He also says that "since the war began the young men and the older boys whom he has prepared for Confirmation and Communion have hardly darkened the doors of the Church." Which being interpreted means that young children will only come to Church if they are driven there, the older boys—and girls—will not come at all, and the elder people do not think enough about religion to bother whether their children go to Church or stay at home. In these depressing times the outlook at Gateshead has some cheerfulness about it.

The village of Magdalen Lever, near Ongar, Essex, has been without a vicar for over a year. We do not know whether we are to congratulate or condole with the inhabitants. The salary is £300 a year. Perhaps an increase of income may solve the problem.

There has been plenty of cant connected with the war, and a deal of it was quite unnecessary from any intelligent point of view. There was the cant that we are at war to protect the smaller nations. We are at war for our own safety and in our own interests, so far as the majority of the people are concerned. We must do something to preserve such freedom as exists, generally because we cannot otherwise preserve our own liberty as a nation. Were the case ever otherwise, and had our political leaders been both honest and intelligent, we should not have stood idly by while Germany and Italy were destroying the Spanish Government and the Abyssinian Government. Neither should we have played the part we did in the destruction of the Czech Government. Even now it is questionable if we shall, as a people, recognize that the days are dead when one country has no concern with what another country does. Certainly we shall not do so if we have the same type of political leaders that we have had for some years.

The Pope plays his part in this spate of cant by praising Fascism in Italy while condemning it in Germany and denouncing the Russian Government because it will have nothing to do with formal religion, although it is doing something, in its worship of authority to keep the religious spirit alive. And both the head of the Roman Church and the head of the English Church—the latter properly nick-named "Arch. Cant."—orate about there being no peace until men enforce the teachings of Christianity. Both these "canters" give different meanings to "Christianity" and "Christian teaching," but it is part of the nature of cant to use the terms while meaning different things.

The wordy Mr. Garvin also, in the *Observer*, joins in with more cant, in his notes for January 21. He says Hitler "has his touch of irreligious superstition." What on earth is a religion that is not superstitious? How can one have a religion without being superstitious? The labelling of any ideals we have as religion is only wedding cant to hypocrisy, or loose thinking. But the reason for "irreligious" in the passage cited is very plain. It will not suit the canters' game to admit that Hitler is and always has been religious. Admitting cheerfully that Hitler is a liar, is lying foreign to religion? The records of the Church will give an answer. Is being brutal to opponents irreligious? Again look at the history of Christianity. Will anyone be good enough to point out any of the crimes committed by Hitler that cannot be paralleled in the history of religion? That he stands in the first

rank of liars and brutes, does not disprove what we have said. The reply is that it is Hitler's deeply religious nature which gives him inward sanction for what he has done and is doing.

One other passage that is supplied by Mr. Garvin. This is worth citing literally:—

Could Hitlerism triumph, the political and humane ideals of western civilization would suffer their worst throwback since the Dark Ages.

Agreed. But the admission is unfortunate for the widespread society of the "Ancient Order of Canters." For the Dark Ages were the ages when there was not a State in the world that could be accused of being non-religious, when individual unbelievers in some religion were few and far between, when in Christendom to criticize the Church meant imprisonment or death. They were the ages when the Christian Church was at its strongest. The Dark Ages were the present of the Christian Church to the world, and had the power of the Church remained undiminished the Dark Ages would have extended to the year 1940. In plain English, Mr. Garvin is saying, without intending to do so, that the greatest disaster to the world would be if we were to get back to the ages when Christianity was strongest. We have said the same thing, many, many times.

We intend dealing with Mr. Lambert's experience with Sir John Reith while the latter was in control of the B.B.C. *Ariel and all his Quality* is a book that throws light on rather more things than even the author is aware of. For the present this sentence will suffice:—

Do you accept the fundamental teachings of Jesus Christ?

This is the question that was put to Mr. Lambert when he applied for a post, and it was put by Reith himself. Mr. Lambert says it was put to every man who came for a job. The character of Reith is shown as well by that question as anything in the book. Mr. Lambert's book is an exposure of the methods of the B.B.C., but not of all of them. We shall return to the subject; meanwhile it has only to be noted that Sir John Reith is now Minister of Information. If his conduct in his new office is equal to what it was in the B.B.C., we shall know what to expect. Government information, at its best, is open to suspicion, we shall see what it becomes in the hands of this son of the Manse, and whether his staff and the public will be treated on B.B.C. methods.

Ireland has banned our contemporary *Picture Post* for three months, ostensibly on the ground of "indecent"—the usual religious charge—actually, of course, because it printed a précis of Mr. H. G. Wells' *Homo Sapiens*, thus allowing thousands of Roman Catholics to see what a great writer and publicist thinks of Christianity. This is an unpardonable crime for the "hierarchy," who, alarmed at the indifference of large numbers of believers, to say nothing of even more "backsliders," are moving heaven and earth to prevent the real truth being known about their religion. The censorship imposed by the Church in Ireland is just a little of the kind of real dictatorship which would be imposed by all the powers of the secular arm if the Pope could have his way in other countries. It is amusing therefore to find him and his followers bleating about "freedom." A precious kind of freedom we would have under the Roman Catholic Church!

It is interesting and instructive to note that the Nazi organization in the United States with a "Fuehrer" at its head, and which intended to destroy the Government and "clear out" the Jews, is called the "Christian" Front. We have no doubt whatever that it is a real and true Christian Front with members who are thorough believers in Christianity. But whether the other Christian sects will warmly welcome these brothers in Christ is perhaps another question.

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# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

JUBILEE FREETHINKER FUND.—C. M. Hollingham, £1; D. H. Kerr (Sydney, N.S.W.), £1.

H. SILVESTER.—The description of Mr. Cohen as Chairman of the Ethical Society, is probably due to confusion.

F. TAYLOR.—Your estimate of 180 millions of Atheists in Russia is fantastically untrue. Your expectation that so soon as anyone professes Atheism he will have a definite political opinion, and that the world would be rid of its troubles if all were Atheists is one that no intelligent student of life would expect. You appear to be carrying the religious spirit with you without being aware of the fact.

F. OWEN.—Shall appear. Thanks.

A. J. GUBERT.—We note your description of the make-up of the jury in the Jersey blasphemy trial. The remarkable thing about all such juries is that they hardly ever include a single Freethinker. It is a case of Christians deciding whether a Freethinker has acted so as to outrage a Christian's feelings. The Christian is prosecutor, judge and jury. Such a trial is about equal to one tried under Hitlerism. We are astonished that a judge, with a proper sense of justice, does not refuse to preside at such a trial.

R. DODD.—We are not in the least concerned with defending the reputation of our professional politicians. What we should like to know is, granting all that is said as to the trickery of our Government, in what way does that justify the Russian attack on Finland? Nor do we need proof that the democracy in this country leaves a great deal to be desired. What we said was that one of the justifications of fighting against Germany is that we may thus preserve the right to make England a democracy. A victory by Hitler is not likely to permit this.

R. LEWIS (Miss).—Much obliged for cuttings.

G. MAINE.—Your newsagent should not have any difficulty in getting the *Freethinker* from his wholesale agent. Please let us have name and address, and if possible name of the wholesale agent.

J. MUIR.—Sorry for bungling of your name. Hope Mrs. Muir, Senior will soon be in better health.

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.

## Sugar Plums

The Llanelly Rural Council has passed a vote of protest against the Government's decision to open Cinemas on Sunday, where there is a sufficient number of soldiers stationed. This cancels the law demanding a vote of the inhabitants to be taken on the issue of Cinemas on Sunday. The avowed grounds of this regulation is that soldiers must have something to do in their spare time, or ill-behaviour may result. But why is this not equally true in the case of civilians? Police officials everywhere testify to the better behaviour in the streets where cinemas are open on Sunday, yet the gangster law passed by the Baldwin Government insists that Christians must be allowed to vote on whether people shall go to a perfectly legitimate entertainment on the "day of rest." No one wishes to compel Sabbatarians to go to cinemas; on what reasonable ground are they given the power whether others shall go? We are fighting a war for liberty—abroad. Why not have a little more at home? The dictatorship of a chapel is not different, so far as we can see, to the dictatorship of an individual.

## Jersey Blasphemy Case

WE have good news concerning the above case, which reaches us just as this issue of the *Freethinker* had been made ready for the press. Petitions have been presented to Sir John Anderson asking for his intervention in the case of A. R. Woodhall, who was sentenced at the Jersey Assizes on January 9 to one month's imprisonment for blasphemy. Mr. Ernest Thurtle, M.P., also made a personal representation to Sir John, who has replied that while he cannot recommend a full pardon, he will advise the remission of his remaining portion of the sentence as an act of clemency. We may expect, therefore, that Mr. Woodhall will have been released before this issue of the *Freethinker* is in the hands of its readers.

Plymouth is also likely to have its cinemas open on Sunday. It takes a war to achieve this amount of relief from Puritanical tyranny. We are now wondering when the authorities will rise to the height of abolishing compulsory Church attendance in Army and Navy. Why should a man be considered less able to govern his own movements, outside of "office hours," because he is fighting in a war that is to make freedom secure? After all the only guarantee of real freedom is when individuals resolve that they will be free and understand what freedom means.

A very serviceable letter on "The Tyranny of the Sabbath," by Mr. W. A. Williams, appears in the *Bebington News*. Some good work is done by this form of propaganda—when newspapers are liberal enough to give space. Sunday leisure can be put to no better use than healthy games. Little bands of Freethinkers might well get together in all districts for the purpose of utilizing the local press as much as possible. We are certain that editors would find discussions concerning religion, carried on on a fair basis, would be of interest to a surprising number of their subscribers.

By the way, we note a letter from Mr. J. W. Poynter in the *Walthamstow Guardian*, pointing out that the B.B.C. acknowledges in the *Radio Times*, that it received many letters complaining of the monopoly of the microphone enjoyed by the Churches, and asking for Freethought to have a chance. Mr. Poynter hopes that this will lead to the B.B.C. adopting a fairer policy with regard to Freethought. We also would hope so, but we know the B.B.C., and have our doubts. It is more likely to lie about the number of complaints. Meanwhile it gives us a series of religious address filled with the most amateurish rubbish by the Rev. J. S. Whale, President of Cheshunt College, Cambridge, on "Facing the Facts." A youth who submitted a paper dealing with Mr. Whale's subjects as he deals with them would be "plucked" at any examination that was not one for entrance to the Ministry. It is a scandal that speeches should enjoy a monopoly of "the air."

We are asked to announce that the lecture by Professor H. Levy, at Manchester, originally for January 21, is postponed. This notice should have appeared in our last issue, but it did not reach us until Wednesday. We have advertised several times that owing to war conditions notices should reach us not later than Monday. The paper has to be finished early on Tuesday. A notice may get in if it arrives on Tuesday, but we cannot guarantee it. The date will be announced later.

The West London Branch N.S.S. is arranging a Social evening at the "Lamb and Flag," James Street, Oxford Street, London, W.1, at 6.30 p.m., on February 3. Admission is free, and a buffet will be arranged. All members and friends are cordially invited. A good gathering makes a social evening more pleasant to all concerned. A series of Lectures are being prepared, and further details will be inserted in the Lecture Notices.



## Health

Now good digestion wait on appetite, and health on both. (*Macbeth* iii. 4).

ANIMALS, controlled by living impulses, without any compulsion, legal, religious, or social, live healthy lives. They know good food from bad. Some forms of food they even use medicinally. From their food, eaten whole, their internal organs extract what is necessary to ensure their body's physical fitness—each organ selecting what it needs, then handing over what is left to the bowels whose function it is to dispose of waste matter. This waste serving as a healthy laxative.

Man, on the other hand, a superior being—the Cosmic Purpose unveiled!—thinks that he transcends nature, that the universe was made to complete and delight him, animals made especially to provide him with food—acts with conscious purpose; extracts essences from many forms of food, rejecting their component parts! eats and drinks more to please his palate than for his stomach's sake; persistently prevents his bowels from getting natural laxatives, falsely imagining that his artificial substitutes—purgatives—health destroyers of all grades—are very much superior. In short, man digs his grave with his teeth!

To contrast their diet for one day only:—

Man in Winter eats much heat-producing food—sugar, starch, fat and oils. He often consumes—Butter 83 per cent fat, Bacon 65 per cent, Beef 17 per cent, Mutton 21 per cent, Brazil Nuts 67 per cent, Cheese 31 per cent, Cream 26 per cent, Sardines 23 per cent, besides many articles containing much starch and sugar—all heat-producing foods.

While the reindeer, after much scratching amid Arctic snow, finds a little moss from which it extracts all its requirements—Nitrogenous food (flesh formers), Carbo Hydrates (Starch and Sugar), Hydro Carbonates (Fats and Oils), a little Salt and Water. How does it do it? An old Highland story may explain "how." "Sandy," said Jock, "Ye'd got a lot o' whuskey yestreen." "What maks ye say that, Jock?" "Because ye were sae fou that's a'!" said Jock "Man," said Sandy, "that's where yu're wrang, it's no what ye tak that tells, it's the use ye mak of it."

As a contribution to a healthy life, the living impulses of the animal seem superior to the conscious purpose of man. And it may be briefly accounted for thus: man was born conservative; his radical questioning mood undeveloped; accepting his mother's politics, religion, etc., as being correct; in diet as in every other sphere the basis of authority undisputed—"My mother's . . . and it's good enough for me!"

That by increase of knowledge, and power over nature, man will ultimately achieve a healthy life, few, if any, will deny. But several centuries must elapse before a consummation, so devoutly to be wished, becomes possible. We are, says Emerson, but at cock-crow and the morning star.

To deal adequately, with this subject would require a volume of considerable size. Mention, therefore, can be made only, in a very brief way, of a few facts relating to stomach and bowels.

A great many people are made ill, many of them suffering untimely deaths, through lack of a knowledge of food. Few know, save by rule-of-thumb, the quality, and quantity of food to be eaten at a meal. A very little attention given to food secures uniformity of digestion, prevents acidity of the stomach, and many other light afflictions. Acidity of the stomach, for instance, is caused often through eating large stone fruits and green vegetables at the same meal. Very little food is needed if one knows how to properly select it. A hard-working man of 11 st. weight,

can live well on 24 oz.: Nitrogenous matter (flesh formers), 4 oz. Hydro Carbonates (fats and oils), 14 oz. Carbo Hydrates (starch and sugar) 5 oz.; 1 oz. of Salts found in the food. This may be taken, roughly, as near enough to a balanced diet for this size of man. To make the most of diet, commensurate with ones needs, is a personal affair. Correct proportions, each must settle according to need.

How sour sweet music is,

When time is broke, and no proportion kept!

So is it in the music of men's lives. (*Richard II.* v. 5).

What I want particularly to stress here, is the absurd amount of fats we use in both Summer and Winter, how unnecessary it is, and how very dangerous. The butter question is a general topic at present. Few people seem to know why we consume so much butter. "There's only four in our family," said a lady, and we have had regularly eight pounds of butter a week, now we can only have one pound." And quite enough had she but known!

A disproportioned diet is nearly always followed by constipation, sometimes obstipation. If diet is correctly proportioned no laxatives will be needed.

Animals, when not domesticated, live naturally. They avoid mixtures. Uniformity of digestion is always theirs. They live on an uncooked diet, and thus make use of essences which man throws away. When their diet is not interfered with by man, they are free from bowel trouble. Left to themselves they need no laxatives. Animals eat to live. Man, too often, leads a sensual, senseless, selfish life in living to eat. Man has always sought after the toothsome, while the animal has rested content with the wholesome.

Man's genius has been his undoing. His constructive ability, instead of displacing his childish delight in destructiveness, has magnified it an hundred fold. He makes "teeth for the toothless, and ringlets for the bald" (Cowper), and covers himself with much glory, but all to no purpose. His ability to help his fellows seems to diminish with age. Primitive man gave food to both the living and the dead. Civilized man won't give it to the hungry. He would sooner burn it.

But I must withhold mine hand! I'm beginning to feel like Laertes:—

It warms the very sickness in my heart,  
That I shall live and tell him to his teeth,  
Thus diddest thou. (*Hamlet* iv. 2).

Man has not yet realized the ancient ideal "*mens sana in corpore sano*"—a sound mind in a sound body. Why? Because, living as he does, he makes the attainment of a sound body almost impossible! Why does man live so absurdly? Because he has been taught for so many centuries to cater for a problematical soul to the neglect of his body—his "vile body!" Religion has made even thoughtful men thoughtless about so many things essential to correct living. Religion has filled our infirmaries and our asylums to overflowing, and has made the acquisition of a sound mind in a sound body almost impossible. Our deplorable condition, mentally and physically, at present, is more due to the influence of religion than to aught else. And it seems to me that our only hope of betterness lies in free-thinking. Until freethinking in every walk of life becomes the dominant force, little progress can be made. "The aim of Secularists was to destroy religion, but, instead of destroying it, they have purified it" (D.D.). "Freethinkers are more necessary in the medical world than in the Religious World" (M.D.). And one might cite similar opinions on Education, etc.

To conclude: Soundness of body, soundness of mind, freedom, can never be ours until we firstly acquire freedom of thought.

GEORGE WALLACE



## Can a Freethinker be a Buddhist?

UNTIL recently my knowledge of Buddhism was merely the prejudice of the more ignorant of those brought up as English Christians. In short, like many others, I believed that Buddhism was an idolatrous Oriental religion, the followers of which worshipped a somewhat revolting, fat graven-image called a Buddha. But suddenly I encountered the following arresting quotation:—

Buddhism teaches the way to perfect goodness and wisdom without a personal God; the highest knowledge without "a revelation"; a moral world-order and just retribution carried out of necessity by reason of the Laws of Nature and of our own Being; continued existence without a separate "immortal soul"; eternal bliss without a local heaven; the possibility of redemption without a vicarious Redeemer; a salvation in which everyone is his own Saviour, and which can be obtained in this life and on this earth by the exercise of one's own faculties without ordained priests, without the mediation of Saints, and without Divine Grace.

That very striking and disturbing statement sent me head-long to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, but the article there on the subject was highly non-illuminative (to say the least) and certainly did not seem to bear out the quotation.

Disappointed, I applied to Mr. Christian Humphreys, a member of my own profession, for guidance. He recommended me to *What is Buddhism?* issued by the Buddhist Lodge of London. That book was certainly no disappointment. Rather was it a revelation.

For pure Buddhism, so far as I now understand it, is not a God-worshipping religion at all. It is really a discipline, a philosophy, to be studied, and above all, lived. Buddha is merely your Teacher; a pointer to "The Way"; an "Enlightened One," like Mr. Chapman Cohen in the realm of Freethought. In the sense that Buddhists reject the concept of a personal or anthropomorphic God they are Atheists (and say so). But the Buddhist acknowledges that there may be a Reality or Noumenon behind phenomena. On the subject of this Reality the Buddha "maintained a noble silence" about what the finite human mind cannot know.

To a Buddhist prayer is harmful and absurd. There is no Heaven and no Hell—except within one's self. There are no Scriptures—in the sense of stories of creation, redemption and supernatural occurrences. There are no miracles. It is from Life as we know it, life ever-changing, ever-suffering and unseparated in its separateness ("all life is one") that Buddhism draws its knowledge and its wisdom.

An epitome for everyday living is contained in the Four Noble Truths and the Noble Eightfold Path. What man, of whatever faith or unfaith, can quarrel with these? And here one reaches a remarkable characteristic of Buddhism—the extreme tolerance, and indeed acceptance, of all other and rival systems including Freethought:—

The man who obeys the behests of morality to whatever form of faith he belongs is on the Path whether he himself is aware of it or not. To that extent at least he may be called a Buddhist. For Buddhism is no mere creed.\*

Then (in a very real sense) all men of right living may all be Buddhists—whatever they call ourselves.

Buddhism has never persecuted like Christianity, and one now sees why. It is too noble, too broad-minded. No wonder a third of the whole human race follows this creed. But not merely in its toleration, in its re-

spect for, and understanding of, all Life whether human or animal, Buddhism seems to me to transcend Christianity. For instance: it also does, surely, in its uncompromising insistence on virtue being its own reward and its repudiation of the hope of heaven as a prize for goodness and the fear of hell as an incentive to avoid evil. So also in its refusal to damn adherents of other creeds, and in its willingness to salute truth in all other creeds of whatever kind.

No priests; no prayers; no temples; no God; no Saviour (save oneself); no personal immortality; no heaven nor hell (except within oneself); no creed; no ceremonies—surely nothing can be nearer free-thinking than Buddhism! Of course this "religion" might well prove too noble and austere for fallible human kind; and so (I suppose) we get the Buddhist temples and schisms, the Tibetan prayer-wheels, the priests and anchorites that we read of elsewhere. But Buddhism in its purity is, I imagine, the most elevated of religions, and if only Europe had been converted to it, instead of Christianity, it is fascinating to speculate how much better and happier all Europeans might be to-day.

Upon certain teachings of Buddhism such as the doctrine of Karma (or Re-incarnation) and Nirvana (or the Final Attainment of Peace) I do not touch because I do not feel competent to do so. Nor for the purpose of this present thesis is it necessary. Those who are interested—and Freethinkers should be interested in every school of thought by which the Spirit of Man seeks to live—can study them for themselves in *What is Buddhism?*

What I am mainly concerned to do here is this. To do something to dissipate the crass and crude contempt for Buddhism as only one of many forms of idolatry, common in Christian countries like England, even amongst reasonably well-read folk. (I blush for shame at my own past ignorance: that of, what the Church of England calls, "a well-instructed Churchman"). Also to suggest that Buddhism as perhaps the purest and noblest form of religion (if religion be the right word) deserves very serious and careful study. And finally to say (what I think will be self-evident perhaps even from this brief and inadequate exposition of some of its cardinal features) that Buddhism is the system of all living faiths that seems the nearest, in its temper and teachings, to Freethought.

For Freethought to be worth anything cannot be merely iconoclastic and destructive. Man cannot live by image-breaking any more than by bread alone. Freethought must give its adherents something positive and constructive on which to base their lives. Buddhists, I gather, would admit that a Freethinker could be, in the essential sense a Buddhist though he had never heard of the Buddha nor his teachings. Possibly a Freethinker might be prepared to agree that he could be a Buddhist? At any rate, he would not need to surrender to superstition or the supernatural if he proclaimed himself one. True, I have not yet heard of a Buddhist Freethinker—but why not? It does not appear, so far as I can see, to be a contradiction in terms.

(I should like to add one helpful criticism of the book, *What is Buddhism?* in return for the great good I got from its perusal. Excellent as it is, I think it too difficult and too full for a beginner. I should like to have read a shorter simpler work, an *Outline of Buddhism*, to begin with).\*

C. G. L. DU CANN

\* A booklet, *Buddha the Atheist*, by "Upasaka," is published by the Pioneer Press at 1s. postage 1½d.—Ed.

The thought of death deceives us; for it causes us to neglect to live.—*Pauvrenargues*.



## The Byzantine Scene \*

THE Eastern Roman Empire is brought afresh into purview by a recent book in the form of a live romance, written round the exploits of Belisarius (500-565 A.D.), the famous general under the Emperor Justinian. Belisarius himself, ranks among the great Captains of history, and may be classed as the last of the Romans—of that line of puissant chiefs who founded the fortunes and dominion of Rome of her great days. Personally, he was of Slavonic stock, though his family had been settled for a century in Thracia and enobled to the second degree according to Byzantine rank. After a course of education at Adrianople and the capital, he was enrolled as an officer in the Imperial Guards, and soon attracted the attention of his superiors, including the reigning Emperor Justin—a veteran soldier—by his superior intelligence and devotion to duty. All which earned for him rapid promotion in his early service, which continued under the Emperor's successor—Justinian (527-565)—leading to high command.

Well, our author presents his hero in the most favourable light (as in certain domestic affairs that do not concern us here), in a detailed account of his campaigns and methods of work. For he was master of every phase of his bloody trade, in strategy or tactic, an innovator in modes and equipment, as with an improved bow, was at home in "defensive," or "offensive" operations, in besieging a town or holding it against assault. Of splendid physique and prowess as an individual warrior, his character, too, judged by the standards of his age, and making normal human allowance, is of outstanding quality in loyalty, honour, and chivalry, in a world peopled for the most part by a crowd, high or low, presenting the opposite of such virtue, and a full proportion of "innate depravity." The judgment of Gibbon is apposite herein:—

Our estimate of personal merit is relative to the common faculties of mankind. The aspiring efforts of genius or virtue, either in active or speculative life, are measured not so much by their real elevation as by the height to which they ascend above the level of their age or country; and the same stature which in a people of giants would pass unnoticed, must appear conspicuous in a race of pygmies. . . . The great Pompey might inscribe on his trophies that he had defeated in battle two millions of enemies, and reduced fifteen hundred cities from the Lake Mæotis to the Red Sea; but the fortunes of Rome flew before his eagles; the nations [or peoples] were oppressed by their own fears; and the invincible legions which he commanded had been formed by the habits of conquest and the discipline of ages. In this view, the character of Belisarius may be deservedly placed above the heroes of the ancient republics. His imperfections flowed from the contagion of the times; his virtues were his own, the free gift of nature or reflection; he raised himself without a master or a rival; and so inadequate were the arms committed to his hand that his sole advantage was derived from the pride and presumption of his adversaries. Under his command, the subjects of Justinian often deserved to be called Romans; but the unwarlike appellation of Greeks was imposed as a term of reproach by the haughty Goths; who affected to blush that they must dispute the Kingdom of Italy with a nation of tragedians, pantomimes and pirates.

"Greek" turpitude bulks largely in these pages, using the term to denote the composite Greek-speaking subjects of the Empire. The mental climate at this time was predominantly Christian as interpreted by the *Ecclesia Græcia*, that singular faith from

Judæa, rising to become the State religion under Constantine, and a measure of Imperial rule, two centuries earlier. Pagan rites and cults were suppressed, though their influence lingered beneath the surface; the surviving schools of "philosophy" at Athens were closed, while their teachers found a refuge at the Court of the Great King of Persia—who, on the other hand, was curious to learn something of the antique Greek culture. Our author's story is related through a eunuch-slave of Antonina, a young actress and free-liver, who later becomes the spouse of Belisarius. She is at the outset a non-Christian, as her profession was banned by the Church, and, as her slave, Eugenius, shares her feeling we get a detached view of the drama of Justinian's reign—its pervading *psychosis* and social gyrations. Theological disputation is a popular interest, aptly illustrated in connexion with an incident in the boyhood of Belisarius. He is going to his first school at Adrianople with his tutor, Palæologus and armed servants, by field paths; and the party are busy preparing a meal at a lowly inn when they are surprised by some ruffianly retainers of a local magnate who commandeer the dinner. Here the young hero first displays his talent for action, for his party plot to overcome these marauders and succeed. First they ply them with wine and the story thus proceeds:—

The Cappadocians began in their cups to discuss religious dogma. This is the disease of the age. One would expect farmers, for instance, when they come together to talk about animals and crops, and soldiers about battles and military duties and prostitutes perhaps about clothes and beauty and their success with men. But no, wherever two or three are gathered together, in tavern, barracks, brothel, or anywhere else, they immediately begin discussing with every assumption of learning some difficult point of Christian doctrine. Then, as the main disputes of the various Christian Churches have always been concerned with the nature of the Deity, that most tempting point of philosophical debate, so, naturally, these drunken Cappadocians began, not without blasphemy, to lay down the law on the nature of the Holy Trinity, and especially of the Second Person, the Son. They were all Orthodox Christians [dual-Nature] and seemed to hope that Palæologus would raise his voice in dispute. But he did not, for he held the same opinion as they.

However, Simeon soon revealed himself as one of the Monophysites. The Monophysites were a sect powerful in Egypt and Antioch, and during the last generation or two had brought the Empire into much danger. For the Emperors of Constantinople were obliged to choose between offending the Pope of Rome, who was the recognized successor of the Apostle Peter and had condemned the sect as heretical, and offending the people of Egypt, on whose goodwill Constantinople depended for its corn. Some Emperors had inclined to the one view and some to the others; some had tried to find grounds for a compromise. There had been destructive riots, and wars, and scandals in the Churches because of this dispute; and at the time of which I write there was a clear schism between the Church of the East and the Church of the West. The reigning Emperor, old Anastasius, tended to favour the Monophysites; therefore the burgess, Simeon, to annoy these Cappadocians, made his loyalty to the Emperor equivalent to his Monophysitism. Simeon proved too eloquent for them, though all shouted at once, so they called on Palæologus . . . who quoted the words of Pope Leo, which I forget myself, but which I gather were to this effect: that the Son is not God only, which is the view of the insane Acuanites; or man only, which is the view of the impious Plotinians; nor man in the sense of lacking something or other of the divine, as the foolish Apollinarians hold; but that He has two united natures, human and divine, according to the texts: "I and my Father are one," and also "My

\* *Count Belisarius*: R. Graves, 1938.



Father is greater than I," and that the human nature by which the Son is inferior to the Father, does not diminish from the divine nature, by which the Son is the equal of the Father.

Simeon retorts with argument to show that the Son's nature could not be split into two as a man splits faggots with an axe, etc. . . . Meanwhile the confederates had tied the legs of the Cappadocians under the table, and, at a signal, there was a scrimmage in which they were overpowered, and taken prisoner into Adrianople. . . .

Of such was the mental pabulum, source of endless disputation, which the Eastern Church provided for its devotees, from this period to the collapse of the Empire under Islamic onslaught in the fifteenth century. No external cultural influences from the past, except indirectly; no scientific advance to speak of on current knowledge; a few developments in architecture of a specious order. The authority of the Church was subject to an extent to the will of the Emperor, according to his force of character, who sometimes favoured one dogma at the expense of another, usually accompanied by persecution or proscription of the opposite side. So the heresy of to-day might become the orthodoxy of to-morrow. Differing widely in Constitution and ritual from the rising Roman Communion—it repudiated its assumptions from the outset; and over which it really had a prior claim to prescription. . . . At length "in 1054 Pope Leo IX. issued a formal excommunication against the Patriarch [of Constantinople] Michael Cerularius. Since that time the separation has subsisted rigidly."

AUSTEN VERNEY

(To be continued)

## The Bible

My friend, Mr. J. W. Barker, sends me the *Freethinker* of January 13, containing the second of H. Cutner's articles on "Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts," and asks me to write a reply. He does this because of our association on Kingston Market Place. There on many Sunday evenings Mr. Barker has held forth," passionately and amusingly by turns," against the dishonesty and ignorance of the parsons, while I, as Vicar of Kingston, fifteen yards off have been shouting invitations to all who are interested to question me on those or any other subjects bearing on religion. In answering those questions (and other written ones) I have more than once cited Sir F. Kenyon's book as an authority more readily accepted than a more regular theologian, who is more easily suspected of bias than a former Director of the British Museum.

Within his limits Sir Frederic speaks with authority. In any field the expert's statement holds against the unqualified man till the latter is proved right. The burden of proof is not on the expert, but on his unqualified opponent. In Sir Frederic's field, if Mr. Cutner or I differ from him we may be right and he wrong, but no sensible person is going to bother much about us till we produce proof much more solid than our opinion. This is as true of Mr. Cutner in his field as of Sir Frederic in his. Apart from this article I know nothing of Mr. Cutner, except that (as appears elsewhere in this number) he has etchings in the present Burlington House Exhibition. What does this article tell me about him?

First, that he is not very careful about choosing his own words or copying those of others. He gives two longish quotations from the book (raising difficulty by giving no references) and in the longer passage he not only omits five lines with no indication that anything is omitted, but makes four mistakes in the copying. In his own words he shows a strong tendency to use words charged with colour and emotion which dispel scientific atmosphere. To say of the New Testament "all the

great manuscripts are at variance with one another," is to say what is strictly true, though it needs supplementing. To say (as he says) that they are "hopelessly at variance" is to desert science for rhetoric, and to contradict Sir Frederic, who says (page 23): "It cannot be too strongly asserted that in substance the text of the Bible is certain. Especially is this the case with the New Testament." The same rhetorical "hopeless" pushes in twice besides, once when it reads as if coming from Sir Frederic's mouth: ". . . here, as Sir Frederic carefully shows, manuscripts, editors and authorities are in a state of hopeless confusion." Confusion, yes; the word may just pass. Hopelessness, no—in Sir Frederic's mind, at least. Another piece of rhetoric is the word "touching" in the sentence: "The increasing study of the Septuagint has undoubtedly unsettled the touching faith in the Hebrew text which has hitherto distinguished almost all textual scholars." Similarly Sir Frederic's: "Recent discoveries have only confirmed this conclusion" becomes an "extraordinary statement," though Mr. Cutner gives no reason for his epithet.

Turning to the substance of the article we find Mr. Cutner approving of Sir Frederic "if one dismisses the theological or religious implications." These are not in Sir Frederic's field nor does he profess to deal with them. A complaint that he "does not devote enough attention" to an issue quite outside his expert province and the professed scope of his book needs no answer. But I may remark that the argument that "as the only-begotten son of God, Jesus *must have known* . . ." is an *a priori* argument for which neither logic nor Christianity give any foundation. Similarly he argues *a priori* more than once that if the Bible books were inspired by God they could not suffer the common mishaps of all books of the manuscript ages. This may be Fundamentalism, but is certainly neither good logic nor good Christianity. In his final sentence Mr. Cutner suggests that to admit various readings is to tend towards heresy. There are people who wish this was true, but it isn't.

What objections does Mr. Cutner bring against the book? On the date of the gospels he is entitled to prefer the anonymous author of the forgotten *Supernatural Religion* to Iarnack and Sir Frederic. He is entitled to doubt whether Sir Frederic is right when (with all other scholars) he says the Septuagint is a translation from the Hebrew. He is entitled to suggest vaguely that (apparently) the Old Testament book took their present Hebrew form only about 100 A.D. But readers who wish to start studying this fascinating subject may usefully turn to such a standard work as the *Encycl. Brit.* article "Bible." In my edition (11th Handy Volume), I find (p. 856), an answer to Mr. Cutner's request for evidence that there was a Hebrew Bible before 100 A.D.: "In point of age the Samaritan Pentateuch furnishes the earliest external witness to the Hebrew text . . . preserved by the Samaritan community since . . . about 432 B.C. . . . written in the Samaritan script which is closely allied to the old Hebrew."

The statement that: "The increasing study of the Septuagint has undoubtedly unsettled the touching faith in the Hebrew text which has hitherto distinguished almost all textual scholars" may be put beside the *Britannica's* remark (p. 860): "More especially since the time of Capellus the value of the Septuagint for correcting the Hebrew has been recognized." Capellus wrote in 1634, so that "hitherto" is approximate only. Three of Mr. Cutner's sayings will win hearty assent from all scholars:—

1. "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." Close and careful study is what is needed, and it matters not what views the student holds who will school himself to it.
2. "Old Testament problems will still . . . occupy a very large part in Biblical study; it will take a long time before the last word is said about them—if ever." Well said! and may we all remember it when making our sermons and speeches and writing our articles!
3. "What can even the most erudite of scholars do with such a complex problem?" Nothing but explore boldly, patiently, scientifically; clearing his mind care-



fully of prejudice, testing his hypotheses firmly, and choosing his words fastidiously. T. B. SCRUTTON

P.S.—If "Mr." is a wrong guess, I apologize to Mrs., Miss, Sir H., or Lord H. Cutner.

I am not to be drawn into correspondence about all this. I have found time to write what Mr. Barker asked for, but cannot do more. As I am no expert, but an ordinary parish parson, my views are not of much value. I suggest Mr. Cutner writes to Sir Frederic or to some expert at a university, who will speak with far more authority than mine.

## Correspondence

### UNDER WHICH STAMP?

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—It is sad to find the *Freethinker* falling into step with the imperialists over Finland. May I object to this use of rubber-stamp values, that "aggression" is always "aggression"?

Here is a parallel. On general principles one defends the right of members of a confederation to secede. But Lincoln "tyrannically" fought the Southern States of the U.S.A. on this issue. Since the *Freethinker* insists on rubber-stamp values, it is clear that it would have condemned Lincoln's "aggression" and defended the slave-states. For "aggression" is always "aggression."

I could similarly show, if I took space to work out the issues in detail, that in this way the *Freethinker* would have been on the side of reaction in every decisive issue of freedom that the world has gone through; and would have been on the side of freedom only after the issue when "freedom" could once more be defended in rubber-stamp terms.

This is very sad.

Soviet "aggression" in Finland is the result of the universally real imperialist aggression overwhelming the world to-day. It is a necessary act against imperialism, against world-reaction, and in defence of the Finnish people.

I don't expect this argument to go down with the rubber-stampists; but if they would examine themselves far enough, they'd find that the rubber-stamp is never really abstract, and their application of it in this instance is merely a reflection in themselves of automatic ingrained imperialist concepts. In the present situation one is either for or against imperialism.

JACK LINDSAY

[The heading in the above letter is ours, but we think it represents fairly its tone and tenour. The clear thing is that our alleged rubber stamp differs from the one in use by Mr. Lindsay. His stamp approves of everything that Stalin does, even to the invasion of another very small country. Our "Rubber Stamp" refuses to affix an impression of approval to the attempt to override an independent people, even when it is alleged that if Stalin does not control that country some other country might, or would. And more particularly when those who, in this country, were shrieking for war against Germany, and with the assistance of Russia, now change their rubber stamp—at least to the extent of shrieking for peace at once with Germany. In these circumstances it would appear that our sin, which fills Mr. Lindsay with "sadness" is that of using a "Rubber Stamp" that differs from his own.

Mr. Lindsay's analogy of the American Civil War is most unfortunate. If Mr. Lindsay will picture Leningrad seceding and setting up a completely independent "Capitalist" Government, or Yorkshire seceding and setting up an independent Government in England, he will have a true analogy. But no one would think of that as aggression—until he got a special rubber stamp.—Ed.]

## Obituary

PERCY JOHNSON

THE passing of Percy Johnson, of Hull, at the early age of 55 years, leaves many progressive movements in the East Riding poorer.

Deceased was an absolutely independent thinker on

the many matters which interested him, and his original views often brought him into conflict, but recognized for his quick wit and facility of expression, he always received a ready hearing. In advance of most of his contemporaries, yet he had a great admiration for the old Radical School, particularly their idea of individual responsibility, and this he carried into effect by attacking abuses single-handed, often with marked success; a fine example for the younger generation. An inveterate rambler, he was well known throughout the East Riding. Fond of, and at home in any company, his interesting and amusing conversation doubtless did much to spread the doctrine of Freethought on rather unusual lines in out-of-the-way places.

Sympathy for his widow and son is spread over a wide circle.

A Secular funeral service was conducted by Mr. C. H. Drewry, Beverley, at the Hull Crematorium on January 12.

## 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

#### OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. I. Lewis.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon until 6 p.m. Various Speakers.

#### INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cricketers' Arms, Inverness Street, near Camden Town Underground Station): 7.30, Mr. F. A. Ridley—"The End of Capitalistic Democracy."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandria Hotel, opposite Clapham Common Underground Station): 7.30, Mr. W. Kent—"Samuel Pepys: A Servant of God."

### COUNTRY

#### INDOOR

ACCINGTON (King's Hall Cinema): 6.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Churches, Fascism and the Flight from Reason."

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, Mr. Thompson (Liverpool)—A Lecture.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 3.0, Prof. Robert Peers, M.A.—"The Economic Background of the War."

TEES SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street, Stockton): 7.0, H. Dalkin—A Lecture.

TEES SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Priestgate, Darlington): 6.30, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton—A Lecture.

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**PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.**

**S**ECULARISM affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement: it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; it affirms that liberty belongs of right to all, and that the free criticism of institutions and ideas is essential to a civilized State.

Secularism affirms that morality is social in origin and application, and aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

Secularism demands the complete secularization of the State, and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organizations it seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of peoples as a means of advancing international peace, to further common cultural interests, and to develop the freedom and dignity of man.

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I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

THE National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

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