

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •
— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LX. No. 6

SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 11, 1940

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>The Dictators—The Editor</i> - - - - -	81
<i>A Captious Colporteur—Mimnermus</i> - - - - -	83
<i>The Evil Genius of Sunny Italy—T. F. Palmer</i> - - - - -	84
<i>The Book of the Law—W. W. Hardwicke</i> - - - - -	85
<i>A Great American Physician and Freethinker— Franklin Steiner</i> - - - - -	86
<i>The Byzantine Scene—Austen Verney</i> - - - - -	90
<i>God and the T.B. Germ—R. H. S. Standfast</i> - - - - -	91
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions

The Dictators

To Freethinkers a survey of the world is not a very pleasing object of contemplation. At all events it is not what those Freethinkers of two generations ago would have expected. For one thing the concept of evolution had filled most advanced thinkers with so extravagant a notion of progress that to most it seemed part of a law of nature, at any rate to the extent that a reversion of the process seemed unthinkable. In addition, freedom of thought and speech seemed so obviously good, it was thought that once achieved retrogression in the shape of renunciation was almost unthinkable. Even Herbert Spencer said that progress was not an accident, but a necessity, all of a piece with the unfolding of a flower. To-day, looking at a large part of Europe, freedom of thought in religion, politics and social life has no public existence. I emphasize that word "public" because in each of the countries I have in mind extraordinary precautions are taken to prevent free criticism. The constant executions, tortures, and imprisonments in dictator States alone prove that Freethought is suppressed rather than destroyed. And gross tyrannies possess no power of perpetuation in virtue of the attraction they have for a free people.

The phrase sometimes used in describing the situation "a return to the Dark Ages" is more picturesque than exact. It is good rhetoric, but it is neither sound psychology nor is it a reliable historical summary. There is no institution to-day to parallel the power of the Christian Church that could be used to bring into operation a common submission to a single force. To perpetuate even a long-term despotism over the whole of Europe requires a unity of government and belief that does not and cannot exist. And if there is not a country in Europe that can truthfully say it is not concerned with the behaviour of other European countries, it is also true that no country can permanently close its borders to the passage of ideas from without: The Church of the Dark Ages found its

most deadly enemy, not in those who lived within its borders, but in the ideas that percolated, mainly from the Mohammedan culture, from without. Until the modes of life and the outlook on the world can be made universally uniform, the suppression of antagonistic ideas, the permanency of a special tyranny, cannot be guaranteed. The fears and "purges" that exist in very dictator country prove this. The phrase "The price of liberty is eternal vigilance," has been overworked and overvalued. "The price of tyranny is eternal vigilance," contains an even more important truth. If tyranny is to continue it must be sleepless in its vigilance. It must be as watchful of its professed friends as of its declared enemies. It must watch the play of ideas among its own people and guard them against the impact of ideas from without. But the variation of ideas is as much a natural fact as is the variation of plants and animals. But variation is only another word for difference, and difference is fatal to uniformity. Aldous Huxley's picture of his "Brave New World" is one of those fantastic impossibilities which fascinate the unscientific reader.

* * *

Italy and Russia

But the Dictatorships are here, and must be counted in any survey that may be made. There are differences even with them. In Italy the dictatorship is divided. Against the Dictatorship of Mussolini stands the Dictatorship of the Catholic Church. Both aim at the control of the mind of the people, and in these conflicting aims there lie the seeds of the weakening of one, if not of both. The Catholic Church dare not, willingly, forego the control of the child. On the other hand, unless Mussolini can catch his Fascists young he cannot rule with any certainty of continuance. On the principle that when rogues fall out, etc., to say nothing of the Italian Crown, there is in this rivalry of Church and Dictator the possibility of better things. Hitler has been more successful in capturing the child. There is no open rivalry in Germany.

In Russia the Dictatorship is theoretically transient, and if ever a Dictatorship was justifiable anywhere it was in Russia. The ignorance and degradation in which Czarism and the Russian Church had plunged the people demanded drastic measures. The Russian Revolution has to be judged by what Russia was compared with what Russia is; and to measure it by the standards of other European countries is neither scientific nor just. But, still, Russia is a Government by a compact minority Dictatorship. Democracy, at which Russia has sneered as much as either Germany or Italy, is non-existent. Russia has the great advantage over other Dictatorships that it permits criticism within party limits, but allows no criticism of the existing regime. Political offences are counted as the most serious of crimes, and the roles of orthodoxy

and heterodoxy are shifted from the religious to the sociological field. There is still a Government which practices coercion and suppression.

Many years ago one of the Russian revolutionists then in England, defined liberty to me as the possibility of an alternative. That is a good definition. Freedom must guarantee the right of attack as well as that of defence, of criticism as well as of exposition and praise. It must admit the liberty even to advocate the removal of all government and substitute the kind of philosophic Anarchism advocated by the late Prince Kropotkin—one of the finest men I have ever met.

Theoretically the Russian Dictatorship is only temporary, serving as the educational bridge between what exists and what will exist when the education of the people is complete. That is the theory, but I have grave doubts whether any party, which experience shows aims at the continuity of an hereditary rulership will ever voluntarily relinquish power once it has acquired it. One of the commonest blunders of to-day is to believe that men struggle for money. Nothing of the kind. All my life I have been insisting that men struggle for distinction, for power, when that indicates distinction; and, of course, what constitutes power depends upon a given set of social conditions. Men will fight for an idea, they will die for it, and in dying leave it as a bequest to those who are left. The quality or value of the idea has no necessary relation to the power of ideas over the mind of man. Progress would not be the incalculable quantity it is were this the case.

* * *

Germany

Germany offers us another situation. The suppression of individual freedom from the cradle to the grave is as complete as an unbridled brutality and ignorance can make it. From the first moment of consciousness the child is subjected to the control of the State, and the German State is the gang of unscrupulous blackguards who are in power, and who maintain power by satisfying among its immediate entourage the vilest of passions. There is not a level of bestiality, of lying, of robbery, of brutality, not merely to men, but to helpless women and children, that the Nazi rulers of Germany and their followers have not touched. Germany has been converted into a huge slave State, and the slavery of the German people is more loathsome than that of the purchased or captured slave. The slave who was bought into the slave of antiquity, or the slave of the Southern American States, might dream of freedom, incited to it by the sight of others who enjoyed a liberty he did not possess. And we know that in old Rome or Ancient Greece a slave might fill the function of a teacher, a philosopher, or an artist. The modern German State boasts that it has no slaves, but that is because there are no free men with whom the slaves can be contrasted. The younger generation of Germans may not have a clear idea of what constitutes slavery because they have no conception of freedom. They are slaves who wear their chains as a decoration. They delight in all of which they should be ashamed, and are ashamed of all of which they should be proud. I know of nothing more horrible than this systematic brutalization of the new German generation, living in a State in which the freedom of access to the world's culture in art, science and literature is denied them. Present-day Germany is one of the most terrible sights that the world has to offer.

But there is one power against which the armaments of modern Germany, with all its violence, robbery, outrages, falsehoods, the outraging of women and the murder of children will be found to be ultimately powerless. That is the power of ideas. Do

what it will the gangsters of Germany cannot exclude the circulation of antagonistic ideas *inside* the country. Still more powerless is it against the impact of ideas from without. Never before has the civilized portion of mankind been brought face to face with anything like the systematic and sustained brutality of Nazi Germany. A people has been faced with periods when culture has been overthrown, when brute force has held control—for a time. But within and without the gates the presence of better ideas, of partly suppressed ambitions, the memory of former liberties and the murmur of existing ones, have kept the spark of freedom alive. I think that a consciousness of this situation, mixed though the motives of many may be, is the ultimate justification of the war that is now raging.

Those who value freedom *must* fight Nazism. And for the reasons already given Nazism *must*—even though the present war had not been declared by the Allies—fight for the conquest of the world. Nazism *must* protect itself against every system from the influence of ideas from without. The conquest of a few small States is not enough. The more Nazi Germany enlarges the borders of its territory the greater becomes the combined influence of the people with whom it comes into contact. In influence, if not in numbers, the enemies of Germany *must* increase with every Nazi conquest the danger of infection grows more imminent. Liberty may live in various forms. Brute force has one form only; and it is that which necessarily arouses the resentment of mankind.

These dictators imagine they are setting something new before the world, when in reality they are redressing something that is very old. Dictatorships were tried in that series of experiments that functioned in ancient Athens, and in many directions during the Middle Ages. Above all it was tried by the Catholic Church, but without the sustained ruthlessness of our modern Totalitarians. But it broke down, time after time. Even the Church, which unlike, or at least more than other despotisms, took the precaution of taking charge of the child, even the Church which added spiritual to physical terrorism, failed. And where the Roman Church failed, such poor things as Hitler, Goering and Goebbels can hardly hope to succeed.

A Dictatorship lacks the capacity to perpetuate even itself. While it lasts it breeds bullies at the top, cowards at the bottom, and hypocrites in between. It carries with it the seeds of its own deterioration because it has nothing good from which it dare select for preferment. It dare not select men of independent mind, because that might lead to antagonism and to its own destruction. And even under the rare circumstance of a dictator being wholly wise and good, if he selects for service men as wise as himself he is faced with the danger of elevating those who may prove to be dangerous rivals, and if he does not, they are mere tools of his own stupidities. But wise and good dictators are very, very rare. And even then the price of establishing them is so high, their maintenance is so expensive, and the cost of removing them is so grave, that on balance they are costly luxuries.

I hope that those who read my repudiation of Dictators, right, left and in the middle, Capitalist, Communist or other, will not write informing me that we are not a Democracy. I am very much alive to the fact, and I have been stressing it all my life. But I think we have in this country the legal right to *create* a real democracy, and that is something worth preserving.

CHAPMAN COHEN

A Captious Colporteur

The kind wise words that fall from years that fall,
Hope thou not much, and fear thou not at all."

Swinburne

It was one of life's little ironies which imposed on the Pagan, George Borrow, the function of colporteur of the British and Foreign Bible Society. The story of Borrow's introduction to the suave officials of that Society is very characteristic of that remarkable man. Hearing of the chance of work for the Society, the young man walked from Norwich to London, walking one hundred and twelve miles in twenty-seven hours, and spending only sixpence on the entire journey. On arrival he told the astonished secretary that he could translate Manchu, and this difficult task was his first work for the Society.

Borrow went to Russia, and facing great difficulties, translated the New Testament into the Manchu-Tartar dialect. Ever a man of resource, there was nothing he was not ready to do, even to setting up type, teaching wooden-headed compositors, buying paper, and hustling lazy Muscovite officials. Later he went to Spain on behalf of the Society, and the adventurous career he led in the Peninsula whilst hawking Bibles in this most bigoted of Roman Catholic countries forms the background of the *Bible in Spain*, one of the best and most vivacious travel-books ever written. *Gil Blas* with a touch of Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, the volume has been called wittily. For the author pays but small attention to the purely religious business of the organization he represented, and he writes of thieves, murderers, gipsies, bandits, prisons, wars, and other exciting worldly subjects, with all the gusto of a Le Sage or Richard Burton. Addressed to the straight-laced and very narrow-minded Victorian religious public, it was a wonderfully stimulating drink to unaccustomed palates. It was the time when strict religious parents forbade all secular books and newspapers on Sundays, and Augustine Birrell has told us how, as an eager boy, he rejoiced in the old Pagan's *Bible in Spain*, the innocent title of which had passed the unsuspecting critics on the hearth.

As may be imagined, readily, the correspondence between the Bible Society officials and the high-spirited George Borrow is truly delicious reading. For their colporteur worshipped at so many shrines from that of a pacifist Messiah to that of the pugilist, Tom Sayers. We see the old Adam so often peeping out in the bagman of Orthodoxy, as Dr. Jekyll changed into Mr. Hyde, and the growing importance and distrust of the officials, who saw their gifted employee boxing the compass, and forgetting the exceedingly narrow channel they paid him to pursue. At times, indeed, Borrow quite forgot the religious jargon and business patter of an evangelist, and it all ended in his being recalled, and being given no further work.

This very strange agent of this Bible Society commenced his literary career in London by writing the *Newgate Calendar*, which bears so marked a resemblance to the older scriptures sold by the Society. Borrow was ever a fighter, even when his Flaming Tinnan days were over, and his animosities extended from Popes to parsons. When a highly-respected Canon of St. Paul's Cathedral, London, ventured to criticize *The Bible in Spain*, Borrow sent a saucy note to his publishers, calmly stating that the prelate was a jackass, and that he would be employing himself better by mending his own petty business in his ugly cathedral.

Borrow, like Richard Burton, had a real passion for adventure, and a sincere love of language. Whilst

an articled clerk to an obscure solicitor at Norwich, he translated a volume of ballads from the Danish. Later, at St. Petersburg, he publishes his *Targum: Translations from Thirty Languages and Dialects*. Nor was this all, for in the course of his travels in France, Germany, Russia, and Eastern Europe, he learned languages and dialects as he went. With the exceptions of Burton and Lucien Bonaparte he was, probably, the most enthusiastic linguist who ever lived. During a few years of travelling activity he made translations in a score of languages, and he produced a Turkish version of Bluebeard, and rendered a number of Spanish, Russian, and Welsh tales into English.

For the last fifty years of his life he lived, passing his existence between Oulton Broad, Norfolk, and London. His famous books, *Lavengro*, *The Romany Rye*, and *Wild Wales*, were all written amid the peaceful surroundings of the Broads, not very far from the home of the genius who gave us the immortal Omar Khayyam. His tranquil days were only broken with fierce paper warfare with critics, publishers, and other people who roused the old lion's wrath. Borrow was always furious at the want of public appreciation; but his fame has grown since he died at Oulton, and the town of Norwich did well and happily in purchasing Borrow's house as a memento of a remarkable man and notable citizen.

Borrow knew both Edward Fitzgerald and his brother John. "The only quarrel I ever had with Fitz's brother John," he said, "was when he spoke slightly of Norfolk ale. No man ought to say a word against Norfolk ale, or good red wine. Fitz said, 'John was as mad as a March hare,' but the only thing mad that I could ever see about him was his disparagement of ale."

Zest of life is the keynote of Borrow's books. This is a much rarer note in literature than is generally suspected. It breaks out in the old rollicking sea-faring chancies, and is to be found in Burns's *Jolly Beggars*. The early Dickens works are full of it, although *Pickwick Papers* mainly concerns eating and drinking. But none chants so joyously of the joy of living as Borrow.

Nature mixed George Borrow in a moment of magnificence. Only those who have realized for themselves the inadequacy of a pen when brought in contact with the rich and tumultuous glow of life can appreciate to the full the wonder of his achievement, the potent (at times too potent) imagination, the keen insight. Besides these great gifts, he possessed in a high degree the sense of the significance of life itself apart from any personal likes or dislikes, of the beauty and continuity of the great stream of human existence. A little aloof, somewhat inscrutable, he will ever remain, but magnificent because of his artistry. Borrow's life was an example of the square peg in the round hole. A son of Nature he was impatient of so much of our civilization, and loved the men and women of the wayside. He recognized in these vagrants the true sons and daughters of "the great mother who mixes all our bloods." Listen to his exquisitely phrased glorification of mere existence: "Life is sweet, brother. There's night and day, brother, both sweet things; sun, moon, stars, brother, all sweet things; there's likewise the wind on the heath. Life is very sweet, brother; who would wish to die?"

MIMNERMUS

Force in matters of opinion can do no good, but is very apt to do hurt, for no man can change his opinion when he will, or be satisfied in his reason that his opinion is false because discountenanced.—*Jeremy Taylor*.

The Evil Genius of Sunny Italy

AFTER a protracted agitation in which Cavour, Mazzini, Garibaldi, Manin and other patriots and reformers participated, United Italy was at last established. The temporal sovereignty of the Pope was swept aside when the French garrison that guarded the Papacy was withdrawn from Rome in 1870, when France was engaged in deadly conflict with Prussia and Victor Emmanuel was proclaimed ruler of a peninsula so long segregated and weakened by opposing aims.

In 1914 the Kingdom of Italy possessed a written constitution, a Parliamentary system and liberty of political and religious thought and expression. The Italian intellectuals were mainly emancipated from theological thralldom and the men of letters and science were distinguished by their ability and advanced opinions. Nor was Freethought restricted to academic circles for, apart from the illiterate peasantry, Rationalism had made great progress in the middle and industrial classes as well.

Then came the World War, with its sinister sequel of autoocracy, when Mussolini abandoned his Socialist advocacy and ultimately established the Fascist State. The spectacular march on Rome in 1922 heralded the social and political revolution in Italy. Unlike the German Nazis and Russian Bolsheviks, the Fascists had no social and economic revelation to guide them in their reconstructive activities. On the contrary, they adopted a policy of an experimental character always open to revision. As no authoritative pronouncement was accepted and therefore no appeal made to infallible guides such as Adolf Hitler and Karl Marx, it is not surprising that the policy pursued by the Fascist leader has been determined by circumstance alone. In his *Modern Constitutions since 1787* (Macmillan, 1939, 16s.), Dr. John A. Hawgood, the Reader in Modern History in the University of Birmingham, concludes that Fascist "philosophy, in so far as it possesses one, is that of its *Duce* at any given moment, and it is characteristic of the first holder of that office, that he has never felt himself bound by his previous utterances or actions. An institution is abandoned or modified as easily as a policy and the change may reflect a complete reversal of attitude and of doctrine. No régime in history has been less doctrinaire."

So far as an outsider can judge, the entire Fascist system reposes on the Duce, and the despotism he has created may crumble and disperse with his death.

Meanwhile every aspect of administration seems to depend upon his advice and assent. A man whose career has been a chequered one, Mussolini was a prominent journalist well versed in *Das Kapital*, who, in his earlier years, acted as editor of *La Lotta di Classe* (The Class Struggle) and went to prison and endured exile for his extreme opinions. At a later stage he relinquished *Avanti*, the leading Socialist organ published in Italy and ran an anti-German publication in 1914. The former internationalist now vehemently acclaimed the spirit of nationalism he had previously execrated. A member of the Socialist Party until 1914, when he was expelled, in 1919 Benito Mussolini formed his first Fascist Group in Milan, renounced his revolutionary doctrines and yet clung to his earlier name. He now asserted that a prosperous and contented Italy would emerge from the activities of a superior few who were destined to arise from the ranks of the people. The disillusioned veterans who had returned to a distracted country at the close of the War, found "a land that was still fitter for heroes to die than to live in, and that had been

robbed by its allies of what it considered to be a large part of the legitimate fruits of victory."

The proletarian soldiers, Mussolini persuaded to unite with the alarmed and incensed bourgeois who were utterly disgusted with the epidemic of strikes and the violent seizure of factories and workshops by the revolutionaries. The Duce also enlisted the services of those members of the aristocracy who distrusted Parliamentary methods of administration, and who now openly derided the politicians for their failure in coping with the pandemonium that prevailed. Mussolini likewise exploited the Chauvinism and poetic frenzy which wafted D'Annunzio and his companions to Fiume. All these groups participated in the march to Rome which sealed the fate of the libertarian institutions of Italy. As Dr. Hawgood remarks: "It was a motley army, and Rome was at first its only common objective. Though its black-shirts might be uniform they were accompanied by tactics of many sorts. People were in the party for jobs, for revenge and for fun, as well as for national regeneration. . . . Its awkward *squadristi*; the fighting sub-groups that had carried on guerrilla warfare with every known weapon from the machine-gun to the castor-oil bottle, had to be liquidated, if the party, in power, was to become associated with public order and decorum." The obstacles to this were formidable and the projected improvements had to be postponed.

Mussolini's first ministry was formed of various elements, but by 1925, when he had seized the reins of power with the King's consent, his republicanism vanished, and his open contempt for elected assemblies became evident, he threw off all disguise and intimated his intention to sustain the supremacy of the Fascist Party by forcible measures if these became necessary. Thus was autoocracy established, and the democratic principle completely abandoned. The State was now proclaimed as the be-all and end-all of national existence. In 1937 the Duce asserted that there was "Nothing outside or against the State." Yet only a few years previously he had written: "Down with the State in all its forms and incantations." He also claimed adherence "to the ever-consoling religion of Anarchy." But if he is inconsistent, he makes no pretences. The Fascist Grand Council is completely under the Duce's control, while his Cabinet Ministers have been bluntly told that they must obey their master, as a subaltern bows to a superior officer, and be prepared to receive marching orders at a moment's notice.

The corporative State was founded in 1926-7. The King continued to reign if he did not govern; the Senate and Chamber of Deputies were suffered to exist, but membership of the Fascist Party became essential to any holder of office, while society was refashioned on a politico-economic basis in which citizen and producer were as closely linked as the Fascist Party and the State.

Dr. Hawgood reminds us that: "By the beginning of 1926 laws had been passed curbing the freedom of the press, curtailing civil and political rights in certain circumstances, limiting the initiative of State officials, and permitting the government to issue 'judicial rulings.' The prerogatives of the Executive and the powers of the Prime Minister were now wide enough for all eventualities." The Duce's dictatorship was completed by his holding of every portfolio which not only made him head, but master of the Cabinet.

Labour disputes were to be negotiated through conferences between local federations of the industrialists and their employees, and the State instituted special courts for their settlement, while strikes and lock-outs

were strictly prohibited. The elections have become farcical, and Finer is cited as saying: "My Fascist friends grin when I ask them what would happen if competing lists of candidates were presented. Indeed, such a thing is unthinkable."

In 1929 Mussolini decided to come to terms with the Pope so long at enmity with the Italian Government whose policy was denounced as impiously anti-Christian. So now the temporal power of the Papacy was restored within the Vatican City State and the banished crucifixes reappeared in the public schools.

The Duce viewed the Chamber of Deputies adversely and asserted in 1933 that it had never pleased him. But the mockery of its re-election took place in the following year, although it had been rendered utterly impotent. Then it was extinguished and replaced by a new assembly known as the Chamber of Fascist Corporations.

The despotism now in operation in Italy, is distinctively collectivist in character. The creation of bureaucratic bodies was greatly increased. The concept of the proper sphere of Government depicted in Herbert Spencer's famous essay is completely disregarded. As Dr. Hawgood states: "New government departments for specific social and economic purposes (health, agriculture, mines, trade, transport) had to be created everywhere. Bismarckian Germany set the pace in the new Government paternalism with its insurance and pension schemes; even the right of property was not so sacrosanct as heretofore, and unearned increment was punitively taxed." The liberty of the subject itself has disappeared in half a dozen Continental States, while the restrictions already imposed in Britain seem prophetic of worse evils to come.

Italy has experienced nearly seventeen years of Fascist rule. Mussolini's achievements are by some acclaimed as veritable miracles of administrative efficiency. Adverse critics, on the other hand, bitterly deplore the degradation and decadence of a once promising people. Fascist admirers dwell on the drainage and purification of the pestilent marshes, improvements in illumination, transport and other benefits, while its adversaries call attention to "the wage cuts, capital levies, continued illiteracy, the failure to improve appreciably a low standard of living."

In any case, the Fascist State exists, and there is not the slightest sign of its immediate or measurably distant overthrow. The conquest and annexation of Abyssinia, the more recent occupation of Albania and Italy's colonial claims, coupled with the vaunted potentiality of Italian military forces, all indicate that the Duce has completely recanted his former internationalism, and has retained nothing of his quondam Socialism save that aspect of it which tends to deify the State. If the shades of Mazzini, Garibaldi, Swinburne, Cavour, Carducci and the many other distinguished dead who longed and laboured for a free, enlightened Italy, ever revisit the glimpses of the moon, one may imagine how much they mourn over the negation of their sanguine dreams of liberty and light.

T. F. PALMER

The Book of the Law

THE five books which contain the Mosaic Law, and known as "The Pentateuch," are erroneously attributed to Moses as author, not only in the A.V. of James (1611), but in the R.V., notwithstanding the fact, which must have been known to the Revisors, that the fifth book—Deuteronomy—gives a description of the death and burial of that tricky Dictator. Such inaccuracy, however, is consistent with others throughout the rendering of the Hebrew text, which does not inspire confidence in the work of clerical revision. We read that Paul, and later that one of the Bishops—Origen of Alexandria—admitted that the use of lies if indulged in in the interests of the Church and if by such means souls can be caught, are justifiable. And even the Church historian—Eusebius—admitted that he had related "what might redound to the glory of, and suppressed what might lead to the disgrace of, religion"—a self-condemning admission of the existence of such. But there can be no valid excuse for unnecessary descriptions of obscene and impure conduct in Hebrew private life being given in minute detail and doled out as "inspired," which should never be heard of beyond the precincts of the bed-tent, such as are related of Onan (Gen. xxxviii. 9), and Rachael and her slave Bilhah (xxx. 3), and "make us wise unto salvation." But are demoralizing to the young and of no educational value.

The scroll containing "the law"—an incongruous and anonymous collection of Hebrew writings, inscribed in consonants without vowels—has undergone many vicissitudes. It was placed for safety in a box or "Ark," with detailed instructions, occupying two or three chapters of Genesis and Exodus, for the building and fitting-up of which with curtains, a veil, candlesticks and lamps; an altar between two cherubim with wings outstretched, and a great display of gold lining within and without; a throne or "Mercy Seat" for Yahuh—Jehovah, the tribal god—and when complete the deity appeared "in a cloud with great glory," while the priests were busy offering sacrifices of sheep and oxen, the number of which was so great it could not be counted, the savour of which came to the nostrils of Israel, as it did to Yahuh when he regretted cursing the inanimate ground and decided that roast lamb and beef were preferable to the worry and anxiety accompanying the flooding of the world again (Gen. viii. 21). Premeditated MYSTERY surrounded all; and had to be encouraged and fostered when dealing with an ignorant and superstitious crowd living in a wonder-seeking age when oracles voiced the decisions and advice of the gods, and when the natural phenomena of daily life—such as thunder, lightning, rain, or snow—were manifestations of their anger, to keep them subservient to the authority and dominance of the priestly caste, to whom they looked for guidance. The altar was horned as Moses was when he descended Mount Sin-Ai, one at each end meeting in crescentic form (the horns of *Aries*, the sign of the Vernal Equinox). The Egyptian and Ammonean gods and Isis—into which order Moses had been initiated—were so decorated. The horning of Moses is wrongly rendered in the R.V., as "his face shone," which, of course, is ridiculous, and intended to disguise its legendary meaning and character.

Ultimately the Ark was carried off to the recently erected and gorgeous Palace of Solomon in the forest of Lebanon, where it appears to have been placed in charge of the Oracle in the Temple entrance (1 Kings vi.-viii.). Here—in the "House of the Lord"—appeared Yahuh, again in his usual cloud which filled the house (Lev. xvi. 2), occupying the "mercy seat" his future home when on earth as "Protector of

Prisoners, whose chain had but been lengthened, we boasted ourselves emancipated and free because we found ourselves able to move around the column to which we were bound.—*Mazzini*.

All ignorance is dangerous, and most errors must be dearly paid for. And good luck must he have that carries unchastized an error in his head unto his death.

Schopenhauer

Israel." However, the "glory of the Lord" was soon to be superseded by horror, for when the priests came to look into the Ark, the Scroll of the Law had disappeared, nothing being left but the two stones placed there by Moses at Horeb (1 Sam. vi. 17). Another incident took place about the same time. Twenty thousand men from Beth-Shemech, appeared on the scene, and it is said peeped into the sacred ark, for which they were all slain! What the priests were thinking of to permit 834 men to pass by and take a peep per hour during 24 hours, without some form of struggle, is beyond comprehension. Then comes the question, how long did it take the men to pass, and how long to be killed subsequently? But what had become of the "Book of the Law"? About 350 years after it disappeared, the priest Hilkiah asserted that he had found it in the "House of the Lord" (2 Kings xxii. 9). By which we are asked to believe that an omnipotent God was so inadvertent as to be a victim of a common act of larceny and unable to spot the criminal. In *Maccabees* we are told that he had hidden it in a cave. However, Shapshah the Scribe took it to the King who ordered it to be taken to the prophetess Hulda at Jerusalem for inspection, who apparently was unable to verify it, but who, by order of the Lord, commenced cursing the place and the inhabitants, saying that, "the Lord" would bring evil upon both—a sample of Jehovan justice (wherever this title is used throughout the Bible, it is to be taken, according to the Preface, to be Jehovah). This scroll was burnt during the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, B.C. 606. A century and a half after Hilkiah's time—approx. B.C. 444, Ezra said he could write a copy of "The Laws" from memory. He said (2 *Esdras* xiv.) that he was the only man who knew it by heart, and that after the return from captivity in Babylon, and before the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus in 70 C.E., he was ordered by God in a dream to retire to a field for 40 days, and—aided by five scribes—to write the whole five books, after being given to drink "a cup-full of strong liquor of the substance of water but the colour of fire"! This copy was sent to Vespasian at Rome, and has never been heard of since.

There were three other reputed scrolls in existence. One, the "Septuagint" was rendered from Hebrew into Greek B.C. 284; and from that into Latin B.C. 277, by order of Ptolemy Philadelphus reputed to have been made by 70 Scribes—probably Essenian monks, who abounded about the hills of Mount Carmel—in 70 separate cells, in 70 days, and all copies agreed perfectly. A pretty tale for the credulous. The agreement in numbers is strongly suggestive of legend; but that it might have been revised by monkish scribes is quite possible. It was, however, destroyed at the burning of the Bruchium Library B.C. 47. Other reputed copies existed, but were regarded as being so full of errors that Bishop Origen undertook to revise and rectify them—the man whom we have seen is an admitted pervertor of the truth; one of these "The Massorah" with traditionary notes, is admittedly very corrupt, but was used in the rendering of the R.V. Strange that Yahuh with the boasted "mighty outstretched arm" attributed to him, could not have prevented his sacred scroll from being stolen, and save it from ultimate destruction by fire, discover the miscreant and punish him! Yet this scroll of sacred writings which has had such bad luck, with other Hebrew writings—equally immoral, and from which fraudulent prophecies have been concocted—is that constituting the O.T., and on which Christians base their religious belief; and is recommended by Timothy (2 iii. 15) to "make us wise unto salvation, is inspired by God; profitable for teaching, reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness, and to make a complete man of God."!

W. W. HARDWICKE

A Great American Physician and Freethinker

SUCH was Albert P. Condon, who died in Omaha, Nebraska, on May 27, 1939. He was born in or near Madrid, Iowa, in 1868, a Roman Catholic. At one time he studied to be a priest. Of poor parents he had to make his own living from the age of ten. His name and appearance were distinctly Irish. He abandoned all intentions of entering the Church, and all belief in supernatural religion, and studied medicine, surgery and dentistry, perfecting himself in all three, and when he died had the reputation of being one of the greatest surgeons in the United States. After taking all advantages of medical and surgical instruction in his own country, he perfected himself in his profession by study in Europe. In 1912 he built in Omaha the Nicholas Senn Hospital, which he conducted himself, and certainly no institution of its kind in the United States had a wider or better reputation. I recall the first time I went to Omaha to visit it. Being a stranger I asked the police officer on the beat the best way to reach the hospital. After telling me he branched out in a eulogy of Dr. Condon, both as a physician, a surgeon and a man. Hence I learned at once that Dr. Condon, unlike Jesus, was not without honour in his own country.

I visited Dr. Condon many times and partook of his hospitality, and incidentally of his knowledge and generosity. He was a man whose delight was to do good—to relieve those in distress, and to give his aid to all good and particularly all movements for the spread of knowledge, and the diminution of superstition and ignorance. One phase of his benevolence was assistance to young men who were preparing themselves for his own profession. Many a young medical student was enabled to complete his course through Dr. Condon's benevolence. He seemed to care nothing about enriching himself.

Another was assistance to those engaged in Free-thought propaganda. When I was travelling and actually engaged in the work, I received from him many a handsome cheque to aid me. He also had moral courage. He did not hesitate to expose the lies and inanities of the preachers in the Omaha daily papers.

His funeral was held on May 29. A magnificent eulogy was pronounced by Dr. Laurence Plank, minister of the First Unitarian Church of St. Louis, who was a personal friend. A few excerpts from Dr. Plank's address would not now be inappropriate:—

Doctor Condon, one of the noblest of our generation, refused to accept any interpretation of life presented merely on the basis of inherited thought. Trained in the scientific tradition, dedicated to a life of fresh and objective observation, hypothesis and experiment, his interpretations and conclusions were based upon what can be proved and demonstrated. He was, accordingly, what is called an Agnostic as to the creeds of the churches.

After quoting Leigh Hunt's poem About Ben Adhim, Dr. Plank said:—

Thus was Dr. Condon's love of his fellowmen. Thereby his work took on the quality not alone of his one concern and responsibility but of religion itself. His work was his mission and his joy. It was like that of a divine dedication, a healing of body and soul, an encouragement, a rejuvenation, a delight to his heart. No matter whether the man was rich or destitute, this man's heart went out to that individual. The sacred bond of humanity was never rent asunder by his mind or hand, and in him the brotherhood of man was made real.

But all of this outgoing and constructive love was never weakened by sentimentality or easy-going concessions to the habits and prejudices of others. Here his character was of as prime importance as his heart. His character was integrated in clean-cut and skeletal fashion. He had a backbone and knew what it was for. As a character, he was always a man in the profoundest sense of that rarely realized word. He was not a conformist, but a man. He was not a member of any herd, large or small. He was an individual. One's mind was stimulated by the vigour, integrity and brave honesty of his own. One's character was strengthened by contact with his, and one's heart went out to meet his with joy, so close did his heart reach out to one's own.

Knowing Dr. Condon as well as I did, I can certainly endorse every word of Dr. Plank in this eloquent eulogy. I can only add that his life was a triumph of Rationalism, proving that there is something better and nobler in the world than "Christ crucified."

FRANKLIN STEINER

Wisconsin, U.S.A.

Aoid Drops

The Dean of Durham, as we have had to point out more than once, has a very strange sense of the value and implication of words. Take the following from one of his sermonettes in the *Daily Telegraph* :—

It has always puzzled me why those who claim the name of "Freethinkers" are so angry when freedom of thought leads to any conclusion which they do not approve. A man has every right to say that he cannot believe in God, but it is neither reasonable nor courteous to abuse those who do; nor can I understand the passionate zeal for a negative conclusion which some of my correspondents display.

This is characteristic of Dr. Alington's method of controversy; making extravagantly false statements in circumstances where no adequate reply is permitted, and handling them as though they were beyond dispute. It is a cowardly method of warfare, but presumably the Dean knows his audience, and feels quite sure that hardly any of them will see the other side of the case.

If the Dean of Durham said that some non-believers in God are angry or abusive when they should not be we would be the last to contradict him. We can assure Dr. Alington that we do not grant Christians a monopoly of bad temper or even of intolerance. Not to believe in God does not of necessity make a man completely broad-minded in this relation or with others. He may have almost as many objectionable qualities as an Atheist as he had as a Christian. We think he very seldom has, but we waive that consideration altogether and take it that in his behaviour to Christians an Atheist may be found who behaves as badly as do a great many Christians towards Atheists. And then what? May we offer a fair challenge to the Dean? Let him tell us exactly what he considers "anger" and "abuse" of Christians, and providing that the language is abusive—that is outside the limits of fair controversy—we undertake two things. (1) To prove that the language can be more than paralleled by the language of Christians towards Atheists, and (2) supply very good reasons for believing that the "abuse" is a direct outcome of their Christian training and environment. We wish we were as certain that the paper on which this is printed will be down to its pre-war price within the next year, as we are that Dr. Alington will take refuge in the pulpit, or within the columns of a newspaper that will protect him from a reply in its columns, and will not accept our offer.

The fact of the matter is that in abusing opponents, and in making all sorts of abusive and false statements about non-Christians, and anti-Christians the clergy and writers

on religion have come to regard themselves as licensed libertines. They have a law against blasphemy which distinctly forbids the same freedom of discussion that applies to other subjects. The newspapers in general, mainly because they fear the Christian boycott, guard Christianity from attack, and insert statements about non-Christians that they would not publish so freely if an adequate reply was permitted. The B.B.C. carefully excludes attacks on religion, while giving a very wide latitude to many kinds of attack on Freethought—mainly by clerical "professors" working under the guise of philosophers. There is, for example, a series of addresses by a Rev. Mr. Whale, now being given on Sunday evenings, that can only be described as "clotted bosh," and which contain a running attack on the non-religious position. A mere beginner in philosophy or sociology could make mincemeat of his case. Scores of illustrative cases could be cited, and we suspect they are as well known to Dr. Alington as they are to us. Anyway our columns are open for the Dean of Durham to justify his statements. But we fancy he will prefer the shelter of the pulpit and the "funk-hole" of a paper that will guard him from attack.

Letters are appearing in the newspapers advocating a Day of National Humiliation and Prayer as one way of helping to win the war. We had quite a number of days of this kind during the last war, and we narrowly escaped defeat. Why not try a new method? Instead of opening the Churches for a day of prayer, and humiliation (Man is never completely religious unless he grovels) why not try the plan of announcing to God that unless the war is ended, say, six months from date, and in the way we wish, all the Churches will close, and praying publicly discouraged until the war is finished in a satisfactory manner? We are being advised on all hands that we must avoid waste and squandering our resources, and must conserve our energies to the one end of winning the war, and if no response is made by God to our offer we could save in the lighting and heating of Churches, and also the wages of the parsonry. But it is really time that we handled our religion at least as sensibly as we do our commercial traffic.

Our readers will remember the organization called *The Link*, ostensibly established to cultivate friendly relations with Germany, but which was shown to be actually an agency for German propaganda in this country. The Society contained a number of well-known names, the owners of which would have been shot out of hand had they behaved in their beloved Germany as they behaved here. One of the founders of this Society, and another member, were on January 30 sentenced to six months hard labour (one of the men a naturalized Belgian) for having in his possession information useful to the enemy, and the other supplying the information. The latter was employed in the dockyard at Devonport. Much of the evidence was heard *in camera*, and both the men pleaded guilty. These men were also members of the Society of Fascists, and the day after the trial the B.B.C. announced that both had been expelled from the Fascist organization—as a result of being found out.

We clip the following from the *Church Times* of February 2 :—

My friend, V. Poliakov, whose international knowledge is extensive and peculiar—he was at one time on the foreign staff of the *Times*—says, in an article in the *February National Review*, that in 1933 German agents in Great Britain spent £125,000 in this country to turn public opinion against France, and that since the yearly expenditure on subtle propaganda has never been less than £60,000. I have some personal knowledge, because I was myself approached by obvious German agents (as I was by emissaries of General Franco), who suggested that it might be worth my while to change my comments, if not my opinions.

Hardly anyone can have any doubt but that the Fascist movement in this country was very largely subsidized and—to a large extent—directed, from Germany. The beginning of the Anti-Semitic campaign in this country was

obviously directed from Berlin. It is difficult to believe that our Government was ignorant of this, particularly when one remembers the supporters in good positions in this country that Hitler was openly getting.

We note Sir Neville Henderson said the other day that Goering may be a blackguard, but he is not a dirty blackguard. We hardly know what qualifications a man would have to possess to merit, in Sir Neville's opinion, the expression "a dirty blackguard," but if assisting at the murder of thousands of women and children, the wholesale robbery of civilians, packing one's house with loot, and assisting in the slavery and ultimate extinction of a whole people, is not full qualification for the title of "a dirty blackguard," Sir Neville must be hard to satisfy.

In dealing with the Roman Catholic attitude to *Picture Post*, Mr. G. T. Garret, the author of "Mussolini's Roman Empire," points out that the paper has "perhaps unwittingly broken two journalistic taboos." The first held by a large number of journalists is "never to mention the Roman Church in a critical spirit." Editors of papers know from experience what happens if they break this rule. Letters are sent by the shoal, and the editor is taught to behave better in the future. Meanwhile Catholic writers to newspapers never fail to introduce matter whenever possible to draw favourable attention to the Roman Church. At this game the papacy has nothing to learn from Goebbels and Hitler. Their policy was practised by the Church centuries before these people were born. What we are interested in is whether the editor of *Picture Post* will give space to those who are able and ready to expose the methods of the Roman Church, and the Churches in general, or, as others do, quietly submit to the practical monopoly of the press by supporters of religious beliefs? We are not very sanguine of a favourable reply.

The Upper and Lower House of Convocation of the Church of England have agreed there shall be a service of intercession praying God to help the Finns. This is quite right and proper because the Finns are mostly religious and Russia is, so far as the majority of the people are concerned, non-Christian. This interference of God in the war, on the side of Finland, is right because in helping the Finns God is really helping himself, for there has never been a God who has outlived his worshippers. The lesson of history is "No worshippers no God."

But the Finnish leaders are asking, not for God but for aeroplanes. Without these, they say, their position is hopeless. That looks like a snub for the deity, but we expect it will be interpreted by believers that God will move someone, or some country to send aeroplanes. In these cases the parson always plays the game of "Heads I win, tails you lose." That is what Christians mean by Faith. Whatever happens, it is God's will. Why, then, pray at all? Well without prayer and worship, how can the gods live? The plain fact before us is that man can live without God. But when and where have the gods been able to live without man?

Cardinal Hinsley wants the world to unite in a crusade in favour of "spiritual teaching" to be "guided by the Pope." Naturally, that is what the Roman Church has been aiming at for centuries—the control of the world by Roman Catholicism. But the world did try that, once upon a time—or, rather the world had that kind of control forced upon it, and the result was the set back of civilization, of freedom of thought and speech for centuries. Fishing in troubled waters the Roman Church is likely to get certain advantages, as in Spain, where Franco has handed back to the Church nearly all the wealth of which it had robbed the Spanish people.

Meanwhile it is counted as one of the unforgiveable sins of Russia that it is assisting at Anti-God propaganda in many parts of Europe. But why not? The propaganda of ideas should be counted quite legitimate between peoples, even advantageous, and must be so if we are ever

to have real freedom. Moreover, what greater advocates of religious propaganda are there than the Christian churches? And if it is legitimate to propagate religion in countries other than one's own, why not propagate non-religion? At the back of this protest of the Churches is the old religious bigotry, the belief that anti-religious propaganda must be forcibly suppressed wherever possible.

A very, very important question has arisen in Dublin. It is whether it is legal or illegal to have a crucifix in what is almost a Protestant Church. The Bishops have considered the case and have decided that "a faculty should be issued for the removal of the crucifix unless a faculty were granted permitting its retention." After that important matter has been decided Ireland can go on attending to less urgent affairs.

A special article in the *Times* supplies the information that "Divine power is available for man in the ordering of his life." But the only means we have of knowing whether power is operative or not is whether man's life is ordered, say, properly. But then the only way we can tell whether this particular "power" is operative is that man's life is ordered properly. And as no one is able to detect any difference between the life that is ordered properly with God, and the one that is ordered properly without him, we do not find the information very useful. It seems again a case of heads I win and tails you lose. Put all the good down to God and all the bad down to man. How very helpful this religious philosophy is, to be sure.

The Rev. W. J. Margetson laments that the "Morning quiet (prayer) time may have to be revolutionized with lots of our accustomed prayers and devotees cut short to give sufficient time for meeting with and listening to the Holy Spirit." The exact meaning of this is rather foggy to us, but it looks as though God is going to be "rationed" so far as prayers are concerned, to allow time for meeting and listening to the Holy Spirit. We are always willing to help when we can, and as prayers are almost always a repetition to-day of what was said yesterday, why not hang up a notice in the Churches that "The Lord is hereby informed that the prayers offered on January 1, 1940, shall be taken as repeated daily until December 31, 1940. After which further arrangements will be made"?

From the *London Evening News* :—

A Captain in the Navy recommended one of his R.N.R. sub-lieutenants for the D.S.C. He got it and the captain sent him his congratulations. The sub-lieutenant replied thanking him. He added: "But for the life of me I cannot think of anything I've done worthy of the D.S.C., unless it was for volunteering to go to church on Christmas Day."

Dr. Peter Green, of Manchester, says—in the heading of an essay on Prayer: "It would be a dreadful thing to take direction of our lives out of God's hands." While Dr. Green throws no light on this tremendously questionable headline, he certainly pokes fun at the silliness of those who pray. Of course, it *does* seem nonsensical to believe Christ's teaching and to follow His ridiculous rules on How to Pray. "Many people," says Dr. Green, "Think Christ meant that we ought to say the Lord's Prayer whenever we pray." Yes, it does look like that. Christ *did* say, "When ye pray, say 'Our Father . . .'" (Luke xi. 2). An Etiquette of Prayer is sadly overdue. God ignores the prayer which doesn't fit into a system known only to God and Dr. Green. For instance :—

I expect [says Dr. Green] God often looks at you and me and says, "I should like to bless my sons, but no, let them ask Me properly."

Talk about Prisms and Prunes, we begin to wonder whether the Heavenly Censorship Bureau really understands some of the languages used in prayer. For example Abyssinian and Polish? Yet it looks as if Finnish were better known to God than Russian, although we used to believe that in Heaven they spoke nothing but English (or was it Welsh?)

To get a New Subscriber is to make a New Friend

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

For Advertising and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—I. Morgan, 5s.; R. B. Radcliffe, 1s. 6d.; J. Trower (N.Z.), 5s.; F.R.D., 2s. 6d.

G. BEDBOROUGH.—Right. "Not to take in a paper because you never agree with anything in it," should read "To take in—." It reverses the meaning of the sentence as it stands.

C. DREWY.—Obliged for address. Paper is being sent.

T. W. GARLEY.—Your letter has been forwarded to the proper address.

I. LANGWORTHY.—We thought we had made it quite plain that our confidence in any political party, existent now or any that may exist in the future, is of a very limited nature. Our function, whether it is discharged well or ill, is mainly that of a teacher. But a teacher has to do with principles, a politician with opportunities. Both teacher and politician may be necessary, but combine them in the same person and one of the functions is certain to suffer.

A. F. SCOTT.—Unless you are making a study of mental aberrations, often salted with a touch of roguery, attention paid to hawkers of Bible prophecies, and the like is sheer waste of time. Such people are immune to criticism but show in close contact a considerable amount of cunning that is often found with poor intellectuality.

Dr. HARDWICKE writes correcting two misprints in his article in last week's issue. "Sailors" should read "soldiers," in line 3, and in last paragraph second line from end "beslai" should read "festival."

M. BARNARD.—Sorry you have been experiencing trouble in getting your copy of the *Freethinker*. But the fault lies with the newsagent, not with us, and we hope you will press for regular delivery. That will help.—Yes, the struggle will be a tough one for us, but we are all right for the present, and have taken reasonable precautions for the future. We are keeping well, although worry does not help one. We are taking as much care as is possible, but the week's work must be done.

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.

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

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

Sugar Plums

We fancy the Jersey blasphemy case is not going to end with the cancellation of a portion of the sentence inflicted at the Jersey Sessions. The Home Secretary, it will be remembered, refused to grant a pardon, but as a mere "act of clemency" cancelled what remained of the sentence of one month. Probably he thought that a pardon might have appeared to be a snub to the Judge. If it did, we can only say it was deserved. A more ridiculous charge was never made against anyone—certainly no more ridiculous charge of blasphemy was ever entertained. The local *Evening Post* remarks, while apparently supporting the verdict, as one might expect in so small a place:

If Woodhall was wrongly convicted, then, surely, the right course would have been to have granted him a free pardon. If he was rightly convicted, the fact that the Home Secretary has seen fit to interfere with a sentence

of the Royal Court of the Island . . . has created a most unhappy impression.

The "unhappy impression" is made, not by this ridiculous revival of a mediæval prosecution of which civilised people should be ashamed, and which was brought about by a single bigoted official, who actually did all the "publishing" that occurred, if we except the evidence that it came into his possession by a sheer mistake, but that the sentence of the local court should have been shortened by the Home Secretary. Many letters of protest against the verdict have appeared in the local press, and in a less mediæval community there would have been protests from the local papers. Petitions had also been sent to the Home Secretary.

But there is a very urgent reason why this verdict should be set aside. Mr. Woodhall is an hotel-keeper. By the laws of Jersey, having been found guilty of a "criminal" offence, he is forbidden a renewal of his licence. This means that so far as the Jersey bigots are concerned he will no longer be able to pursue his livelihood. Malignity could hardly go further than this, whether it is intentional or not. Mr. Woodhall could say with Shylock, "You take my house when you do take the prop that doth sustain my house; you take my life when you do take the means whereby I live." We think that Sir John Anderson should do all that lies in his power to remedy the social and moral—if not the legal—injustice that has been done.

Unless the facts on one or both sides have not been disclosed, the Government has made a bad blunder in refusing the *Daily Worker* permission to send a reporter to Finland. And not to give reasons for the refusal is a bigger blunder still. Every newspaper is entitled to precisely the same privileges, and a limitation of the rights of one paper throws suspicion on those who are responsible for their action. If we are really fighting to prevent the control of Europe by German barbarism it is ill-doing to copy its methods at home. Besides, the *Daily Worker* might by sending a representative to Finland enable its readers to discover that there really is a war there, that the reports of civilian towns being bombed are not "fakes," and that its constant reprinting of Russian official reports which limit the war to "patrol actions" tends to keep its own readers in the dark. We should like to see the matter raised in Parliament. We have not so much liberty at the moment that we can afford to sacrifice anything in that direction that can be retained.

All the preliminaries to the formation of the Cardiff Branch of the N.S.S. have now been completed and await approval by the Executive. In connexion with the proposed Branch, a discussion on "Does Man Desire God?" will take place to-day (February 11), at the Left Book Club Centre, 6 Fitzalan Place, Cardiff, at 3 p.m. All interested are cordially invited to take part in what should be a well spent afternoon.

We have often commented on the absurdity of prayers for rain, and the still more ridiculous nature of the alleged replies. Here is a case from the review of a book dealing with life in the more isolated parts of the United States of America. There had been a drought, and a Methodist Minister organised a united prayer for rain, much on the lines of our "Day of Intercession," and so forth. True enough the rain came, but it was "too blooming wholesale." There was a violent thunderstorm, and amongst the damage a barn was destroyed belonging to a cantankerous farmer. He brought an action against the Minister, and claimed 5,000 dollars damages. The case went, ultimately, to the Supreme Court. The farmer lost his case. The court decided that the parson prayed for rain only, the lightning which destroyed the barn was something thrown in gratuitously by God. The story is given as a fact, but fact or no fact, it is what happens generally when God is asked to interfere with the weather. His action is as near foolishness as is his "calling" a man to the Ministry who cannot even put up a plausible apology for believing in the deity who has selected him.

The Byzantine Scene*

(Continued from p. 61)

THE reign of Justinian covers a particular phase in the fortunes of the Empire. At its outset, Italy and most of N. Africa had been lost, and its writ did not run beyond the Adriatic. It was troubled by the inroads, of "barbarians" of another species from the N. East, Slavs and Western Asiatics; its Eastern neighbours were a recurring trial. Justinian aimed to recover some of these provinces under the lead of Belisarius, of whose fame, none the less, he was jealous and mistrustful. His character is drawn in these pages in anything but a flattering guise. The springs of action of historic personages must remain matter of surmise: availing contemporary evidence may be prejudiced one way or other. One point does issue, that his treatment of Belisarius was mean and ungrateful.¹ The Imperial throne was nominative rather than hereditary, and Justinian had been chosen by his uncle, Justin, and trained for the office. . . .

In her unregenerate days, Antonina had run a sort of pleasure and entertainment house under the patronage of the Constantinople élite, in company with her *belle amie*, Theodora. Justinian there meets Theodora, who eventually becomes his Empress. Eugenius was general manager, and this experience enables him to give a view, not always appreciated by historians and that ilk, of the part played by strong ambitious feminine personalities—such as these two women—either regularly or irregularly, on the course of human affairs through men's passions and turpitude. He has much to say on Justinian in the course of his narrative, and we will here summarize his characterization:—

One of our clients was a strange, round-faced, smiling, lecherous fellow named Justinian, a nephew of the illiterate old barbarian commander of the Imperial Guards, Justin. He had sent for Justinian when a youth, from the mountain village in Illyria where he had himself once been a shepherd-boy, and had given him the education that he regretted himself not having had. . . . none of the ladies knew what to make of Justinian, and though he was courteous and amusing and seemed destined to become a person of importance, he made them feel uncomfortable, in some obscure way, as if he were not quite human. . . . He was a Christian and revelled in theological discussions, as much as, or more than in faction gossip, and salacious jokes and stories; and he used to fast regularly. . . .

You may wish to hear more of Justinian as Emperor, how he behaved. The man was a mass of contradictions: most of which, however, were to be explained as the result of great ambitions struggling with cowardice and meanness. Justinian wished, it seemed, to make himself remembered as "Justinian the Great." His talents would indeed have been equal to the task if he had only been less of a beast in spirit. For he was incredibly well-informed and industrious and agile-minded and accessible, and no drunkard or debauchee. On the other hand, he was as irresolute as any man I ever met, and as superstitious as an old church-widow. He had decided, after studying the history-books, that sovereigns are honoured as "Great" for four main reasons; for successful home defence and foreign conquest, for the imposing of legal and religious con-

¹ There is ample contemporary evidence, or annals, for this period. The question arises over their interpretation as to fact. His distinguished editor, Bury, differs from Gibbon on points; and they both reject the tale of the blinding of Belisarius, towards the end of his career, on a false charge of treason, accepted by our author. . . . This "question" applies to "history" at large.

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

formity on their subjects (totality), for the building of great public works, for personal piety and stern moral reform. He set to work on these lines.

He began on the legal side with a recodification of the laws, and I own that this was greatly needed. No single code existed, but a variety of codes side by side, all contradictory, obsolescent and obscure, so that a judge could not give a fair decision in any but the simplest cases even if he so wished. Justinian's industrious legal officers eventually ordered the great confused mass into a single fairly intelligible and not wholly contradictory system.²

. . . Religious conformity he tried to attain by the smelling out of heresies; but he was not consistent in this, because for fear of Theodora, he chiefly persecuted Jews and Pagans and the minor sects of Manichees and Sabellians and such-like, while allowing the Monophysite and Nestorian heresies, wherever there was no proved connexion with Green faction politics—to continue unchecked. . . . His great public works consisted chiefly of the building and restoring of monasteries and churches. These were, of course, profitless to the Empire (except in a vague spiritual sense) and not to be compared with the building and restoring of aqueducts and roads and harbours and granaries, to which he did not pay nearly so much attention. His plans for foreign conquest, of which he made Belisarius his chief instrument, I shall soon have occasion to mention more fully. . . .

Material interests were not neglected. One service rendered to civilization at this period by Byzantium is the introduction of Sericulture. Antonina is made the indirect instrument in the story. She had meanwhile experimented in matrimony with an elderly husband who conveniently took his departure leaving her well-off. He was a merchant established at Antioch, and had befriended some Nestorian pilgrims on their way to China on the understanding they were to bring back "the secret of silk." This carefully-guarded secret they were able to surprise and duly returned with the egg of the silk worm enclosed in sealed bamboo canes. The widowed Antonina comes back to the capital and brings this discovery before the notice of Theodora; who rewards her by making her a great lady at Court. Previously commerce in silk had passed through the domain of the Great King, who exacted a handsome levy thereon. Its cultivation is then systematically encouraged in the Empire. The story accords with the facts—apart from romantic embellishment.

A side light is thrown on the religious modes and manners of the Capital in a description of the formal processions to the Cathedral Church of Saint Sophia on Holy Days, a church which Justinian embellished and expanded. Dressed in their gorgeous toilets the Emperor and Empress and ladies and officials of the Court pass through the street; the populace turn out

² Hence the Roman Law, which became a special subject of study at the rising Universities of the Middle Ages, and created a body of interpretative Legists. . . . Remarks Gibbon: "The public reason of the Romans has been silently or studiously transfused into the domestic institutions of Europe; and the Laws of Justinian still command the respect or obedience of independent nations. . . . Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, Scotland have received them as Common Law or reason; in France, Italy, etc., they possess a direct or indirect influence; and they were respected in England from Stephen to Edward I., our national Justinian." . . . But the Common Law of England going back to Anglo-Saxondom, has been less affected thereby; which, together with the early institution of a Representative Parliament is one of the distinguishing features of historic English culture.

The moral reforms of Justinian are said to have been influenced by Theodora, among other things—elevating the status of women and wifedom. . . . Also, it may be noted, that for the first time in the Code *Paderasty* was made a criminal offence; and has remained such in Western Jurisprudence. This peculiar "vice" was widespread in the antique world in East and West, and it is found in Native America.

to welcome them, washed, and in their festival clothes, and do them obeisance; embroidered cloths hang from the windows commingled with flowers; gay marching hymns are chanted by the monks in the procession, and throughout the city is heard the rhythmic drum of mallets on sounding boards summoning the faithful to prayer:—

My mistress was in her customary good humour as she reached Saint Sophia's. Passing through the line of penitents in the vestibule, who are cut off from the Eucharist and may approach no nearer, she climbed the stairs and sat down next to the Lady Chrysmallo, in the front row of the gallery-seats, which were reserved for women. She leaned over the carved sill and began signalling merrily to her male friends in the nave below; for a great deal of intimate information can be exchanged thus with the aid of hand and kerchief. At Saint Sophia's, as at most fashionable churches, the sacred nature of the service is not taken over-seriously; clothes and gossip provide the greatest interest in the gallery, and a buzz of political or religious argument from the nave invariably drown the reading of the Scriptures. However, the singing of the canon choirmen is usually listened to with some respect, and nearly everyone joins in the chanting of the General Confession and other prayers; and if the sermon is being preached by an energetic preacher it is often greeted with appreciative clapping and laughter or with earnest hissing. The Eucharist is dispensed at the conclusion, and then the blessing spoken, and out we go again. . . . "Against such civilized and sociable Christian functions it would be foolish to bear any grudge," my mistress used to say—"they are merely a quiet variety of the Theatre performances." . . .

Through her connexion with the court, Antonina again meets with Belisarius, and they become espoused. He had seen her first in his youth at a private entertainment, in the romance, where she had so impressed him that he avowed to her his feeling—and her image had remained with him. . . . She accompanies him on his campaigns and proves a valiant, resourceful comrade-at-arms.

Not the least noteworthy feature of Byzantium was the fusion of political and religious feeling with popular sport and amusement. The passions thus incited came near to endanger Justinian's throne early in the reign.

AUSTEN VERNEY

(To be concluded)

God and the T.B. Germ

HARRY lay dying in the next bed. That wasn't really his name, but it will do. Names don't matter much to a dying man. Not to a man dying as Harry lay dying, his body racked by those terrible spasms, and, when his body left him at times in comparative peace, his mind tortured by those thoughts of a loved and devoted wife so soon to be left bereaved on the poverty-line with seven children in some of whom the same unseen insidious germs already sowed the seeds of their hell's harvest.

There were others dying, it is true. Quite a number of them will now be troubled no more. There was "Paddy," just across the way from Harry, a virile happy-go-lucky young giant, not much more than half Harry's 47 years, on whose remaining term of life one would cheerfully have taken a lease—until those hæmorrhages began. Even then we didn't think—well, not too much if we could help it. But pretty soon it was screens and last rites for Paddy.

Yes, there were others dying, other tragedies. An

only son here, seventh victim of a family there, a father, a husband, a sweetheart. But somehow the portents of death in Harry, all so familiar, yet appearing so suddenly in the change of a week, aroused our pity, our helpless desire to help—yes, and our own fears—more than with those others. Not only because we were friends—in that way we were all friends in that community thrown together by fate—but also because of Harry himself and what he had been but a few short days before, with his transparent sincerity and simplicity and basic humanity; because of that brave enduring wife to whom his troubled mind so often turned, and those seven children with some already stricken in their midst.

So it was that the irony appeared the richer in its mordant bitterness when an elderly moon-faced clergyman paused in his round at the sight of the semi-conscious form and decided there and then to offer up a prayer for recovery to "our loving and all-merciful Father."

The presence of the dying man was not a suitable place for debating the logic of the clergyman's idea of helping Harry (we ourselves would gladly have told him all the fibs and fables of the Christian annals if they would have cheered or comforted him, but we knew that he had no real faith in them despite the red disc on the chart above his head which vividly proclaimed him "Church of England"). So the man of God went on his way without being called upon to answer such relevant questions as:—

Wasn't it rather late in the day to expect "our loving and all-merciful Father" to do anything out of his "love" and "mercy" when he had already allowed Harry to go through such suffering himself, and all unwittingly to inflict such suffering on those nearest and dearest to him?

Had God forgotten Harry that he had to be reminded about him?

If God was now to help, or allow, Harry to recover, what on earth was the point of letting him get into such a plight, anyhow? And why inflict suffering on those surely innocent children?

As the tubercle bacillus apparently serves no purpose other than to cause tuberculosis and all its suffering, why did a "loving and all-merciful Father" create it? And other germs, like that of cancer?

Such questions, of course, are but a specific form of the old, old "problem of evil," the so-called "mystery of pain and suffering." Note that it is religion which creates both the "problem" and the "mystery." On a natural, scientific view of the universe, freed of muddled metaphysics and supernatural hangovers, pain is no mystery, but an unwelcome outcome of one side of the nature of things which man, unless drugged to resignation and martyrdom by religious beliefs, tries to avoid, prevent, conquer or alleviate by every medical, surgical, physical and psychological means in his power. Such a view—whatever it hopes eventually for the nature of man—does not demand that the "nature of things" in its totality shall exhibit kindness or lack of pain. It does not "blame" the universe for being itself by containing pain as well as pleasure, and it has the decency to remain logical by not "praising" the universe for being itself by containing pleasure as well as pain. It is left for religion to reverse this process—and the logic. For it is only when advanced religions bring in their infinite, all-powerful, all-knowing, all-loving, all-merciful God and strive to make out the "nature of things" as the expression of his beneficent will, that the "problems" and "mysteries" of pain and evil also come into existence. Like the God, the "problem" and the "mystery" are created by religion, and have no existence apart from religion.

And to what outrages of reasoning and speech do

such "mysteries" lead those caught in the webs of their own weaving. Take an example from a broadcast talk by the Rev. Leslie D. Weatherhead on "The Mystery of Pain: Man's Attitude to Suffering," in which he tried to answer the query how prayer for others can possibly bring cure:—

When I pray for John Smith I don't tell God something He doesn't know. I don't persuade a reluctant God to intervene. He is there already. But what conceivably I may do, especially if I am living close to God myself, is to surround his (John Smith's) mind with a psychic atmosphere which just alters everything. If a patient's mind turns to hope and belief in recovery; if it is attuned to God and can be made sensitive to God's love and power and care, then the balance can sometimes be tipped to come down on the side of life instead of death, even if the patient's mind is unconscious of all this. Our unconscious minds are potent to promote health or resist disease, as experiments in hypnosis have shown (*The Listener*, June 15, 1939).

Such a prayer, he suggests in this merry mix-up of psychology and religious hocus-pocus, is simply "co-operation with God on the psychical side of John Smith's personality" as the work of doctors and nurses is "co-operation on the physical side." But observe the caution with which the mixture is prescribed—he may "conceivably" do such a thing and it may "sometimes" work. Sometimes the patient will get better, and sometimes the patient will die all the same. Which, on the law of averages, is a fairly safe bet.

Mr. Weatherhead is to be congratulated on a delightfully pseudo-psycho-scientific "re-interpretation" of an attitude familiar to more honest believers in such terms as "If we get better, thank you, God; your will has prevailed. If we don't get better, don't think we have any idea of blaming you, God. You know best what is good for us, O Lord; your ways are not our ways, do with us as you will."

So once more we find this eminent "religious psychologist" up to his favourite game of running with the secular hare and hunting with the religious hounds. As with so many of the instances given in his writings and speeches, he might again be reminded that where results obtained through secular agencies using religious mediums or terms are paralleled by results obtained through secular agencies using non-religious mediums, those results must, scientifically, be ascribed not to the mediums in either case, but to the secular agencies. Mr. Weatherhead blandly gives all the credit to the religious mediums. It is an old trick, though not always given such an impressive scientific setting. But whatever its setting and flourishes, the argument cannot escape from its own lack of logic by which it ropes in those who get better as items on God's credit side, while ignoring those who don't get better. Book-keeping for God is book-keeping made easy—one simply ignores all possibility of a debit side. Mr. Weatherhead's variant may be more ingenious, but it still remains just a variant of that invaluable friend of the religions, "Heads' I win, 'tails' you lose."

Well, Harry is dead. He didn't die that time we thought he would, the day the man of God offered up his prayer. He rallied—unbelievable as it seemed—and lived four months after that. "Lived," did I say? Rather say that he took four months longer to die. Rather apply to those weary weeks of life's ebbing, the phrase of doom with which the stricken Keats described the final period of his own "posthumous life." Four months more of bodily suffering and mental anguish, of relapse and rally, rally and relapse; months of desperate clinging to a life that was but a mockery of life, and through all those struggles

against death the bitter knowledge that death was steadily, daily, growing closer. And then, one day, his wife no longer sat, dry-eyed and tortured, by his bed. The tragic farce was over.

And what of God, the setter of the stage, did he smile or weep, or was he omnipotently indifferent, as yet another of his puppets danced the *danse macabre* to its bitter end?

For the religious cannot have it both ways. They attempt to justify their God intellectually by telling us that he is necessary as the First Cause without which the universe cannot be explained, the Creator of All Things and the Source of All Power. Then they tack on the moral side by telling us that this all-powerful Necessity is also all-just, all-merciful and all-loving. But this moral argument cancels out the intellectual argument just as surely as the intellectual cancels out the moral. Either the all-powerful Creator of All Things deliberately created the tubercle bacillus specially to bring suffering and lingering death to millions of innocent men, women and children; whose suffering he can but will not either prevent or alleviate. Or else God did not create the T.B. germ, and wishes to prevent or alleviate those millions' suffering but cannot—in which case he is not all-powerful, and therefore cannot be the First Cause, and so loses every shred of that dialectical "necessity" which the intellectual argument claims for him.

Which God, then, do the religious worship—God the unnecessary, or God the omnipotent monster?

R. H. S. STANDEAST

Correspondence

"WAR OR SOMETHING WORSE"

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Soon after the outbreak of war I submitted an article to you, in which I gave reasons for declaring that our Government had no justification for bringing this nation into war with Germany. You declined the article for reasons which are not material to my present thesis. But I suspected, at the time, that your action was prompted by motives of which you yourself were not conscious. And now I have confirmation of my suspicions.

The confirmation is found in a couple of sentences which you wrote in last week's *Sugar Plums*. The material parts read as follows: "As we have said more than once, the choice before the people was not, last September, between war and peace. . . the choice was between war and something worse, and we may find we are getting the war with that something worse."

Now if words are to make sense, then one alternative (when it comes to a choice between two) must exclude the other—else they are not alternatives. Yet, having chosen war as the alternative to "something worse," you now admit that we can get the "something worse" into the bargain! In other words, you have at last confessed that your alternatives were not alternatives at all, and that the choice of war has not excluded the possibility of "something worse."

You will forgive me for saying that this "something worse" alternative to war was (and is) merely a result of "bogey thinking." The alternatives were not "war or something worse," but "war or no war." And when it comes to prophesying, I have as much right to say, and as much (if not more) reason for believing that, if we had not chosen war, the necessary alternative of no war would not have resulted in "something worse," but in "something not so bad."

C. S. FRASER

[We are obliged to Mr. Fraser for his lesson in logic, but we still think that the alternative of war with Germany and the submission to Hitlerism offers a real alternative. Nor can I see that if through bungling we lose the war and, after

all, have to submit to Hitlerism, that the original alternative is negated. Alternatives, we may point out, are of two kinds. In one case the alternative may be inevitable. In the other case it may be contingent upon circumstances. For example, "Will you pay a blackmailer or face discredit which is certain to arise if the money is not given?" But I may pay the blackmailer and still suffer discredit. In what way does that destroy the original alternative?—ED.]

MR. ROBERT LYND AND THE B.B.C.

[The following letter was addressed to the editor of *John o' London's Weekly*, but was not inserted. Although it covers some of the ground covered by last week's "Views and Opinions," we think it worthy of insertion here.—ED.]

SIR,—Mr. Robert Lynd would object to innocent listeners to broadcasts being treated to controversy, yet he can inveigle an innocent reader by an attractive title "Objectionable Jokes," to read an interesting article into which he has imported controversy. I read with pleasure the first two columns, the last made me rampant.

"In point of fact, Freethinkers and Atheists are not excluded from the wireless. All that happens is that, like the Christian broadcasters they are not invited to take part in religious controversy." Does Mr. Lynd really ask us to believe there is any equality of treatment? The Archbishop of Canterbury is free to tell his listeners his views about God, Christ, Immortality, the trinity of Christian interests. Why, in the name of liberty and reason, should not the non-Christian? Will he please give us the names of any Freethinkers who have been allowed to express themselves freely about the problems of the universe which may appeal to their hearts and minds as much as to those of the Christian? Freethinkers do not claim that when an Archbishop delivers himself of some religious allocution or when Rev. Leslie Weatherhead discusses the problem of pain over several Sundays, Lord Snell, as President of the Rationalist Press Association, should be allowed to reply, but they do say that the public should be entitled to hear the one over the air as well as the other. "There are halls," true; there are also churches. The plea for the religion over the wireless is on behalf of the aged and infirm. There are aged and infirm Freethinkers.

I fear Mr. Lynd stretches himself comfortably on Laodicean beds, and cannot understand the Freethinker kicking. He has never shown any propensity to understand his point of view. Still, for one who writes regularly in the *News-Chronicle* and *New Statesman* more real liberalism might have been expected. It would be different if we lived in the Middle Ages. Then we might sing with truth.

We are not divided, all one body we
One in hope and doctrine.

Now with a galaxy of intellectuals outside Christendom the prohibition is preposterous. The orthodox frankly admit the disintegration of doctrine under the criticism of men like H. G. Wells, Aldous Huxley, C. E. M. Joad, Bertrand Russell, Chapman Cohen and Joseph McCabe, but they can hardly want the B.B.C. to suggest by its attitude that every Christian is as frightened as a rabbit by any Freethinker. When my friend, S. K. Ratcliffe, broadcasted on Bradlaugh, there was not a reference to his being an Atheist. When mention was made of the death of J. M. Robertson the public was informed that he was an authority on comparative religion, instead of a leading Freethinker or Atheist. Amusing to add, Robertson, voluminous and encyclopaedic as he was, had not written a single book on that subject. Does every Christian listener shiver at mention of an Atheist?

There should be as much freedom over the air as in the air—at Hyde Park. There should be some sort of proportional representation of time which would give the Plymouth brother and the Freethinker a chance. "You can always switch it off." True, and this is what the orthodox would do. If they were so ignorant, as some would be, not to know what to expect from one of the gentlemen mentioned above, perhaps a red light could appear when they were announced. This would indicate that

these human animals were dangerous. I am sure, Mr. Lynd can find no valid reason why there should not be occasional broadcasts from Conway Hall as well as St. Martin's-in-the-Fields. He will hardly maintain that any statement to which objection may be taken is controversial.

W. KENT

IDEOLOGY AND THE FASCIST WAR

SIR,—In an endeavour to clear away some of the mental confusion that is having such sad results, there is much I should like to write on "Ideology"; but, hitherto, the lack of time has prevented this. Naturally, G. H. Taylor's article interested me; and I agree with much of it. There are a few points, however, on which some comment may be useful. By temperament as well as philosophy, I am concerned neither to condemn nor to approve what has been done by the U.S.S.R.—or by "Stalin," if so you prefer it. I am interested in observing and estimating the sequences of happenings from which the present dangerous state of affairs is the outcome. One of the clearest thinkers has stated, as two Principles of Scientific Atheist Philosophy: "The sum of all that is is the product of all that has been, and in this, desires, feelings, dispositions are included no less than physical properties." For the future: "The possibilities of action are co-extensive with the actualities of ignorance. There is no break in the working of causation, no matter what the sphere of existence with which we happen to be dealing." In that light, "Stalin's" Policy—so it seems to me—is the, almost "inevitable" result emerging from British "Tory" Policy, at home and abroad, ever since the end of 1917. The other Parties and Sections on the "Progressive" side, of course, are also factors in the economic-political process and product.

Friend Taylor falls into the so common fallacy of regarding "Imperialism" in its old form of territorial aggrandisement in colonies or markets. British "Imperialism" to-day is something much more complex than that. It is an Economic Power—land, trade, industry, finance, more or less interlocked—to exploit land, sea, air, and human labour, throughout the world. Thus, a country may be a politically or nominally independent Republic, Kingdom, or Dominion: at the same time, it may be an "economic colony" of British "Imperialism"; while the greater part of its People may be—ideologically—subjects of the Vatican. There are many concrete cases of this to-day; and, unless this is borne in mind, the argument about "Imperialism" cannot be understood.

To talk of Chamberlain being "held in check . . ." and "probably forced to listen . . . when peace is made . . ." is just the measure of the failure, at every step since 1931, of Labour Party, Opposition Liberals, Communist Party, I.L.P., etc., etc., to make any effective definite united resistance. The tragedy of Spain is the ghastly monument to that; and, whether Stalin be wise or unwise in what he has done, he did it in an attempt to break the vicious web by which British "Tory Interests" were trying to encircle the New Russia.

As for finding out "what the Tories are doing"; surely that is evident enough? They're doing us. Their aim has been the same, indefinitely since 1917 and definitely since 1931. It seems logically clear to me that the war is against Hitler, not against Hitlerism. With Hitler out of the way, and with a Government established in Germany suitable to the Chamberlain-Daladier "Interests"—with or without a Puppet King—our "own exploiters at home" would feel sort of safe in a Federal combine—Chamberlain, Franco, Mussolini, the Vatican, Portugal, Germany, etc. That looks like being not merely a "Fascist War," but another Fascist Victory. At the Vatican, one Pope rejoiced in Mussolini's "Great Victory" in Abyssinia. The world-wide Ideological Force centred in the Vatican has been, openly as well as underground, World Enemy No 2 of the New Russia from its very birth; and another Pope will more than rejoice at such a consolidating of Force—Economic, Ideologic, Political, and Military, in such a Federal combine: if, or when, it is formed.

For my own part, I am chiefly concerned in helping to get the "Common People" to *understand* how we have arrived where we are; and, in this, Religion as our heritage from Primitive Ignorance and Fear is the most vicious cause of confusion. Then, only by arousing sufficient public interest can an effective demand be made to publish to the world *now*, definite Peace Aims. Merely to "smash Hitler" is not good enough. "Stalin's" action, whether right or wrong, only makes the need for this more urgent. Sooner or later, a Conference *must* take place to settle Peace; and a growing number of the Common People are demanding "sooner," rather than "later."

Here is an effort in which all Freethinkers ought to be willing to help.

ATHOSO ZENOO

TOLERATION

SIR,—A few reflections on the question of toleration may not be untimely at the present moment. I have in mind, especially, the feelings aroused by the statement of any opinion whatsoever on the conduct of Soviet Russia in international affairs. If the editor of a freethought journal ventures to breathe a word about Russia, the consequences are usually most unedifying, angry protests pour in from those against the view expressed or equally irrational shouts of approval. This is shameful, and a complete denial of the principles of Freethought. Allow me to take my own case. A few years ago I visited the Soviet Union and was greatly enthused by what I saw there. At the same time I saw much that was wrong. After my return I satisfied very few seekers after information because most of them appeared not to want to know the truth, but merely to have their preconceived ideas confirmed. Because I had a great deal of good to say of Soviet institutions ordinary folks labelled me a Communist and some Communists, in their turn, dismissed me as incurably bourgeois because I had defects to report. I gave up talking after discovering that, next to religion, there is no subject upon which people are more dogmatic than that of Russia. This is a dangerous trend which every true Freethinker must fight. We have fought and are still fighting ideas of an infallible God, Church and Creed, and we are surely not going to throw up our hands now before the doctrine of an infallible system of politics? We must preserve a balance between what I will call, without offence meant to either side, the wolves of Capitalism and the sheep of Communism. I disagree with most of the popular criticisms of Russia, but I am ready to listen dispassionately to every one of them and not to allow partisanship to overpower my sense of judgment. Russia, which is only another name for a vast conglomeration of fallible human beings, stands to gain eventually by unbiassed criticism, which Freethinkers by their training should be qualified to give. And when we differ let us do so with dignity, restraint and mutual respect.

E. A. McDONALD

REFERENCE WANTED!

SIR,—The epigram, "If there were no God it would be necessary to invent him" has been attributed to Robespierre and others. Mr. H. Cutner, in his excellent article, in your issue of 7th inst., mentions Voltaire as being the author.

Perhaps your erudite contributor will be good enough to furnish exact details as to authenticity so that the matter may be settled (at least, as far as I am concerned).

S. GORDON HOGG

Obituary

MRS. MARY JANE WERHLE

WE regret to announce, at the age of 78, the death of Mrs. Mary Jane Werhle. In her early years Mrs. Werhle was an ardent supporter of the Freethought Cause, a regular attendant at meetings, and a great admirer of Bradlaugh,

Mrs. Besant, and G. W. Foote. She spent some years in South Africa, and in spite of living in the midst of a narrow religious community, played the part of an active propagandist, both by conversation and by the circulation of literature. In such circumstances it required unusual strength of character to allow one's views to be known when they run in the direction of uncompromising Freethought, but Mrs. Werhle showed herself equal to the occasion. Since her return to England she has associated herself with the N.S.S. again, and her daughter, Mrs. Warner, is a very active worker in the West Ham Branch N.S.S.

The Cremation will take place at the City of London Crematorium, at 11.30, on Saturday, February 10.

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. 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, A Debate or Lecture.*

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandria Hotel, opposite Clapham Common Underground Station): 7.30, Mr. A. West—"Finland and the U.S.S.R."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, C. E. M. Joad, M.A., D.Lit.—"The Philosophy of Federal Union."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Flag and Lamb, James Street, Oxford Street, opposite Bond Street Station): 7.0, E. C. Saphin—"Further Bible Excavations."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 3.0, Mr. T. H. Elstob—"It is Reported . . ."

RATIONALIST EVALUATIONS AND THE TRUE DIRECTION OF CIVILIZATION

By AUSTEN YERNEY

Presents a doctrine based on a Libertarian Ideal of Social Progress and Ascendant Life, as against all Totalitarian and Dictatorial Systems whatsoever.

Heath Cranton Ltd., 6 Fleet Lane, London, E.C.4. 7s. 6d. net

CREED AND CHARACTER

The Influence of Religion on Racial Life.

By

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Price 2d.

Postage 1d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.4.

LETTERS TO THE LORD

Chapman Cohen

This work shows Mr. Cohen at his best
and his wittiest.

Price 1s. By post 1s. 2d. Cloth, by post 2s. 2d.

Issued for the Secular Society, Limited by
the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon St., E.C.4
LONDON

THE MIRACLES OF ST. MARTIN

BY

C. CLAYTON DOVE

Price post free 7d.

Paganism in Christian Festivals

BY

J. M. WHEELER

Price 1s Postage 1½d.

BRAIN and MIND

— BY —

Dr. ARTHUR LYNCH.

This is an introduction to a scientific psychology along lines on which Dr. Lynch is entitled to speak as an authority. It is a pamphlet which all should read.

Price - 6d. By post - 7d.

**PRIMITIVE SURVIVALS
IN MODERN THOUGHT**

CHAPMAN COHEN

Cloth, gilt, 2s. 6d. Postage 2d. Stiff paper
1s. 6d. Postage 2d.

THE PIONEER PRESS,
61 Farringdon St., London,
E.C.4

**FANFARE FOR
FREETHOUGHT**

By

BAYARD SIMMONS

A collection of verse wise and witty, filling a gap in Freethought propagandist literature. Specially and tastefully printed and bound.

Price One Shilling.

Postage Twopence.

THE AGE OF REASON

THOMAS PAINE

Complete edition, 202 pp., with a 44 p. introduction by Chapman Cohen. Price 4d., postage 2½d. Or strongly bound in cloth with portrait, 1s 6d., postage 3d.

THOMAS PAINE

JOHN M. ROBERTSON

An Investigation of Sir Leslie Stephen's criticism of Paine's influence on religious and political reform. An indispensable work for all who are interested in Paine and his influence

SIXPENCE

Postage 1d

THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

CHAPMAN COHEN

A critical examination of the belief in a future life, with a study of spiritualism

CLOTH 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.; PAPER 1s. 6d.
postage 2d.

RELIGION AND SEX

CHAPMAN COHEN

Studies in the Pathology of religious development

Price 6s.

Postage 6d.

Prayer : An Indictment

By G. BEDBOROUGH

Price 2d.

Postage ½d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK

By G. W. FOOTE and W. P. BALL

Cloth 2s. 6d.

Postage 3d.

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING

FIFTH SERIES

CHAPMAN COHEN

About Books. The Damned Truth. Maeterlinck on Immortality. On Snobs and Snobbery. Jesus and the B.B.C. Man's Greatest Enemy. Dean Inge Among the Atheists. Politics and Religion. Christianity on Trial. Woman and Christianity. Why? Man and His Environment. The Nemesis of Christianity. Good God! God and the Weather. Women in the Pulpit. All Sorts of Ideas. According to Plan. A Question of Honour. Are We Christian? A Study in Fallacy. Medical Science and the Church.

1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Series 2s. 6d. each

Price 2s. 6d. Postage 3d.

The Crucifixion and Resurrection of Jesus

BY

W. A. CAMPBELL

Cloth 2s.

Postage 2d.

Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ

BY

GERALD MASSEY

Price 6d.

Postage 1d.

THE REVENUES OF RELIGION

BY

ALAN HANDSACRE

Cloth 2s. 6d. Postage 3d. Paper 1s. 6d. Postage 2d.

MOTHER OF GOD

BY

G. W. FOOTE

Post Free

2½d.

THE BIBLE HANDBOOK

i. BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS. ii. BIBLE ABSURDITIES. iii. BIBLE ATROCITIES. iv. UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES AND BROKEN PROMISES. v. BIBLE IMMORALITIES, INDECENCIES AND OBSCENITIES

By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball

Millions of people have read "The Bible" but only a few read it with an unprejudiced mind. Believers read it in the light of inculcated obsessions and with their minds closed to a real understanding. "The Handbook" sets forth the Bible message as it really is, it is made to tell its own story. Every text is cited accurately and exact reference is given. It is a book that is useful, even indispensable to Freethinkers and it is educational to Christians.

Cloth 2s. 6d. Postage 3d.

Shakespeare & other Literary Essays

BY

G. W. FOOTE

Price 3s. 6d.

Postage 3d

WILL CHRIST SAVE US?

G. W. FOOTE

This pamphlet is a characteristic piece of writing of the founder and late editor of the *Freethinker*.

Thirty-two pages, Twopence. Post free 2½d.

Other Pamphlets by G. W. FOOTE

BIBLE AND BEER. 2d., postage ½d.

THE MOTHER OF GOD. 2d., postage ½d.

DEFENCE OF FREE SPEECH (being his speech before Lord Coleridge in the Court of Queen's Bench). 6d., postage 1d.

THE JEWISH LIFE OF CHRIST. (Translated from the Hebrew), with introductory preface. 6d., postage ½d.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF SECULARISM. 2d., postage ½d.