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

Views and Opinions

Religion and Morals

WHERE their religion is concerned Christians are chartered libertines. In politics they demand rights and privileges because they are Christians, which they refuse to others. They get elected to Parliament on a purely political issue, and once elected place sectarian interests first. They may lie with complete impunity about those who oppose their religion, and not only are they without censure from their brother religionists, but the majority outside the religious field are neither surprised at their conduct, nor do they publicly protest against it. Hitler is being condemned generally because of the campaign of lying and misrepresentation that he has carried on. But, in this method of fighting, the Christian Churches were generations in advance of Nazi Germany. It is true that the technique was never worked out quite so elaborately as it has been in Germany, but the essence of it was there, and all that Germany had to do was to study Christian methods and elaborate them. It has been pointed out that Germany has now a younger generation which, as a consequence of its training, is almost incapable of thinking on lines different from that dictated by the governing gangsters. One need only study Christian history to realize that even here the Christian Church was before Hitler, Goering and company in the work of distorting a sense of moral values.

It is as a consequence of this moral distortion that Christians will be found practising the same rule that German Fascism adopts in its relations to other countries and other peoples. That is why I have said that where their religion is concerned a Christian becomes a chartered libertine. He will insult with a compliment and lie lustily in the name of (Christian) truth. If a non-Christian lies or steals, there is in the fact a lesson on the consequences of repudiating Christianity. If he behaves with decency, it is, as even ex-Dean Inge reminded us, because he has a mainly Christian environment. As there is nothing in

Christian teaching that insists upon the same degree of honesty that governs trade-marks in commerce, the Christian does not hesitate in taking every-day virtues such as truthfulness, honesty, family affection, etc., and labelling them "Christian virtues." It is a wonder one has not heard of the Christian multiplication table!

* * *

The Law and Religion

A probable illustration of the truth of what has been said was furnished by a case heard in the West London Police Court on March 5. A woman and her daughter aged 13 were charged with stealing a pair of shoes from a Kensington store. The mother was sentenced to a month's imprisonment, the little girl was sent to a juvenile court—the magistrate evidently thinking her guilty. All was, thus far, plain sailing. It was the magistrate's duty to deal with the case as he saw it from the legal point of view. But the magistrate, Mr. Paul Bennett, went further and, as is common with magistrates more than with judges of the higher courts, proceeded to comment on the case of the child. Looking at the girl, he said:—

I wonder if she has ever received any religious instruction at school!

Of course, Mr. Bennett might have meant "What is the use of religious instruction if it ends in this way?" If he did, it would not have been a very profound remark, for no one with any intelligence would hold that any teaching would be infallible in its influence in a required direction. But I hardly think this to be the case for, unfortunately, the majority of those men in public places who see through the claim that religious teaching makes for desirable conduct, keep their mouths closed. I think, if I were a magistrate, I should not take it for granted, or even consider it a basis from which to work, that what a man before me was likely to do might be decided by whether he had or had not received religious instruction. We would venture the guess that at least ninety-five per cent of the people who come before Mr. Bennett have received religious instruction.

I think the last remark is pertinent because I believe that what Mr. Bennett wished the public to conclude from his remark was that had this little girl received religious instruction she would not have stood before him charged with stealing a pair of boots. And that is not only nonsense, it is gratuitous nonsense. The belief that there is any logical or necessary connexion between desirable social behaviour and religious conviction is one that is given the lie by the history of any people in any country and in any period. Mr. Bennett should bethink himself that he is where he is to administer the law, but he has no right to misuse his office by passing—even by implication—a censure upon a very considerable section of the community. Of course, he might plead in defence, that he has not had many before him who have not received religious

instruction, and thus, we may follow the example he himself sets in doubtful cases, dismiss Mr. Bennett with a hope that he will behave with more consideration towards the public in the future.

* * *

On Origins

Mr. Bennett does however raise a problem—in one sense *he* is a problem. And the problem is two-fold. First, why do so many assume that morality and religion are identical, and, second, by what means have the two things become identified? For the plain historic fact is that religion and morals have actually different sources of origin. Roughly we may say that while religion springs from the intellectual side of life, morality has its beginnings in the gregarious side of animal life, and is recognized as such in the social life of mankind. It is with the development of thought and language that religion comes into being. All scientific research into the origin and nature of religion proves this. It is true that fear made the gods; it is also true that had human fear remained at the level at which an animal cowers at the sight of a startlingly strange apparition, or at an unusual noise, the gods would never have come into existence. It is with the development of mental life at a point when the howling of the wind becomes a mysterious voice, when the dream of the animal reaches in man the stage of assuming a dual existence, in a phrase, in the personification of natural forces, that religion has its commencement. Fear made the gods, but it is fear that comes from the intellectualizing of human terror and human helplessness that provides the foundations of religion. Remove this mental quality of early religion and we are left with a vacuum, or with the unscientific assumption of a religious instinct.

Religion, however we may approach it, is essentially a theory of things. It is a summary of man's beliefs concerning the world in which he finds himself; religion, so far as it exists, is the conscious relation of man to his world. That primitive man thinks of the forces with which he is in contact as akin to himself is an inevitable outcome of the situation.

Morality, on the other hand, has its beginnings in the animal world and pre-dates the consciousness of its significance. Man, it may be said, creates religion, but he discovers morality, and it is implicit in practice before it is explicit in theory. Morality is deeply rooted in gregarious animal life. And the reason for its existence is obvious. In any group of animals, apart from the short-lived consideration for others that is evidenced in care for the young, action must include others. There must be a rudimentary sense of the rights of others, and of consideration for others, if the group is to continue. No one who studies purely animal life can doubt this. To use common language, other-regarding conduct must go hand-in-hand with self-regarding conduct if the group is to live. Greater care for the young is the condition for that lengthening of infancy upon which depends, among the higher animals, adjustment to an environment that takes wider, stronger and more elastic forms, and upon which the development of the higher animal—and ultimately human life—depends. All this is the very alphabet of modern evolutionary science, or at least should be if evolution in all its phases and all its implications were better understood.

But all this is only another way of stressing the fact that the fundamental qualities of morality are, as I have just said, acquired rather than discovered. Like the man who had been talking prose all his life without knowing it, morality is there in practice long before it is recognized in theory. By the time a definitely human group is established moral practice exists as an expression of the fundamental conditions that make life possible. What happens in the case of moral

evolution is the growing perception of the value of certain qualities, their revaluation and their application to a wider area. Some qualities decrease in their social importance; others increase. In that sense ethics is at once the most static and the most elastic of the sciences. If one wishes to realize this one need only study the wide variations of sexual and family life, where one has the same fundamental facts with an ever-varying expression. I have put the position in a few sentences, but whoever reads a treatise on ethics, whether of the fairly useless "be good, sweet maid" character, or a genuine study of the significance of conduct, will find the above suggestions useful.

* * *

Moralizing Religion

To get back, then, to what I think is the confusion of Mr. Bennett with regard to ethics and religion. Religion has in its origin nothing whatever to do with morality. It originates in the earliest stages of human intellectuality which lacks knowledge and understanding enough to avoid wrong conclusions. Morality, on the other hand, is implied in the very earliest forms of associated life. It is imbedded in feeling, determined in form by prevailing conditions, and developed as social life develops. A society that does not maintain what has been called a moving equilibrium, that is, does not adjust itself in teaching and practice to the necessities of life, tends to disappear, or at least to stagnate.

But religion also belongs to group life. What part does that play in social existence? Here one must note the plainest, but not the most readily recognized of facts. The tendency of religion is to conserve—not because of the cheap and easy explanation of some gain on the part of a particular social group, but because it rests so largely upon fear, which reacts upon the moral life. The religious explanation, as I have said so frequently, is the earliest explanation man gives of things, even of those actions and sentiments that are deeply imbedded in his nature, and its earliest and strongest instrument is fear. The Biblical command "Fear God and Honour the King," is not a bad summary. Its exact equivalent, expressed in social terms, is "Believe firmly in the gods and obey their orders without question." But on the other hand the development of man, his growing understanding, his greater sympathy, his keener sense of justice, his growing perception of the nature of ethical values, all combine to exercise control over religious teaching. Religion as such, does not, and never has exercised a moralizing influence on life. But religious organizations have been compelled to ask for social support on the ground of their assumed value. Of course we still have such survivals of the Stone Age as Sabbatarians and the like who threaten society with ills because folk do not obey ancient religious commands. But on the other hand, we have had going on a moralization of religion which has for myriads wiped out the influence of purely religious teaching. The doctrine of Hell lost its vogue, not because God had revised his message, but because the growing humanity of man labelled it as brutal and demoralizing.

So I present to Mr. Paul Bennett a brief skeleton of a study of the nature of religion and ethics. Only a skeleton, but one which I think still has much marrow in its bones. And I think that what Mr. Bennett should have said, was:—

I suspect that this girl has received, as the vast majority of children have received, religious instruction at school. I would earnestly ask those interested to consider the value of this religious teaching. Should we not do better if we paid less attention to religion, and more to the real factors that make for wrong-doing? Should we not recognize, as a wise

Atheist remarked more than a century and a half ago, that in every crime there are two factors—society and the criminal? The fault may be greater on the one side or the other, but the two factors are always there.

But then I think if Mr. Bennett had spoken along these lines he would have been seriously taken to task by those guardians of the gods who stand between them and destruction.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Doctor Rabelais

Is it so small a thing
To have enjoyed the sun,
To have lived light in the spring,
To have loved, to have thought, to have done;
To have advanced true friends, and beat down baffling foes?

Matthew Arnold

FRENCH literature has a special distinction. It is a blaze of splendid scepticism, and the name of Francois Rabelais is one of the greatest in this illustrious roll of honour. The general idea of this great scholar coincides with Pope's famous line, depicting him "laughing in his easy chair." He has been pictured as one who laughed and mocked at all things, as a mere bon-viveur. Actually, his genius had many facets. To others he appeared as a great teacher, a gross writer, a Catholic, a Protestant, and a Freethinker. To paint him as a moralist alone is to ignore the innate drollery of his character. To set him up as a mountebank is to forget the stern reality which underlies his writing.

To treat Rabelais as destitute of all serious purpose in art or life is a great mistake. Whatever he may have been, he was not a trifler. He lived at a time when the Roman Catholic Church was all-powerful. He knew ecclesiastical life from the inside, and knew all the tricks of that sorry trade. Studying Greek when it was a forbidden language, he was an apostle of learning when scholars carried their lives in their hands. His zeal for intellectual freedom, untrammelled by priestcraft, places him in line with Erasmus and Von Hutton as an instrument of humanism.

Of middle-class parentage, Francois Rabelais was born in the fifteenth century near the lovely little city of Chinon, on the Vienne, where Henry the Second (of England) cursed his sons and died. Always he regarded Touraine, its cities, rivers, and vineyards, with affectionate admiration. "Noble, ancient, the first in the world," so he called it in the fullness of his heart. His father, an innkeeper, wished to make him a priest. Accordingly, little Francois was sent at nine years of age to the Benedictine monks of Scully, so young that the white vestment was put over the child's frock. Later, he was removed to the Franciscan Monastery of Fontinoy le Comte. The Franciscan vows included ignorance as well as celibacy and poverty. For fifteen years he remained there, taking priest's orders at the age of twenty-eight. Always inquisitive, he amassed that wide knowledge which he put to so good a use in his own world-famous books.

It is to this long period spent amongst the bigoted, narrow, intolerant sons of this Romish Church that we owe his undying hatred of priestcraft. It breaks out in nearly every page of his writings, here passionately, there sorrowfully, with a cry of rage, a sob of pain, or a mocking laugh of *sanglante derision*. He hated the "monk-birds" more bitterly than even Erasmus, for his character was stronger.

Think of it! At the age of forty he came into the wide world at last as a free man, at liberty to follow his studies, burning with a pathetic enthusiasm for the new learning. He threw aside the monastic habit,

and became secretary to the Bishop of Maillezais. Afterwards he went to the University of Montpellier with the object of obtaining a medical degree. When he attended the lectures he was within sight of his fiftieth year, and he sat by the side of men young enough to be his sons. Two years later he went to Lyons, where he held an appointment as physician to the hospital. His friend, Etienne Dolet, the Freethinker, was already established as a printer in the place.

Rabelais' connexion with the first reformers of France is certain; the extent hard to determine. He had no desire for a martyr's crown, and he never contemplated following Calvin into exile, or Berguin to the stake. As he smilingly explained, he was "too thirsty to like fire." His sympathies, too, were so broad, and antagonistic to all dogmatism. "Presbyter," to him, was "but priest writ large." Luther and Calvin were, in their way, as abhorrent to him as the other priests. He was all for liberty of thought and expression. The society of Des Perriers, Etienne Dolet, and the Lyonnais Freethinkers was far more congenial to him and to his habits of thought. Moreover, and this is important, he had an intimate knowledge of the power of the Romish Church, and of the malignity of her persecution.

Heretics were then handed over to the secular arm to be burnt alive for the good of their souls, and the greater glory of God and the Church Catholic. Rabelais did not intend, if he could help it, to be butchered to make a Roman holiday. When he was denounced as a heretic, he challenged his enemies to produce an heretical proposition in his writings. They were unequal to the task, but, nevertheless, the heresy was there. Rabelais' caution was necessary if he wished to live. Some of his contemporaries suffered for heresy. Dolet was burned to death, Des Perriers was driven to suicide, Marot was a half-starved wanderer in Piedmont. Giordano Bruno was later done to death in the accepted Catholic manner. Rabelais had every reason for not wishing to be "saved by fire."

His writings have survived the mutations of centuries, and kept his memory fresh through the ages. "Gargantua" and "Pantagruel," as they are entitled, are a series of satires in a vein of riotous and uproarious mirth on pedants, monks, priests, and all the solecisms of his time. With all their licence and freedom of expression, they reveal a heart aflame with love of liberty, and a passionate desire for the triumph of truth and justice.

It has been said with truth that Rabelais despised women. He did not write till an age when the passion of youth had consumed itself to ashes. Love was killed in Rabelais by that hateful system of monkery which has filled Christendom with unspeakable horrors. Poor Rabelais! Half of humanity was absent from his mind. Love, the central fire of the universe, the source of all human joys and sympathies, the bond of society, appears in the accursed monastic system in which he was trained as corruption and depravity. This damnable, ascetic system surrounded Rabelais from the time he wore a child's frock till he was a man of forty, and the best side of his nature was strangled. He never loved, never even thought of loving. He had no more respect for women than a bloated eunuch in an Eastern harem. Nay, more, there had even been crushed out of him that love for his mother which characterizes every man worthy of the name. As the old galley-slave used to be known by the dragging foot, on which had been the heavy iron fetter, so when the unlovely years had eaten away manhood, imprisoned with its blind instincts and objectless passions, the monk is known by his sexless mind. Thrice poor Rabelais! Priestcraft spoiled his life. The robe he wore was to him

like a bodily deformity, narrowing his view, corrupting his mind. Originally, his nature must have been very difficult; witness those exquisite chapters in which he describes the monks of Thelema, whose motto was "Liberty."

Tradition has it that he died saying: "I go to seek the great perhaps." The phrase has the merit of being characteristic. We may picture the rage of his opponents when the old scholar slipped quietly out of their eager clutches. The Romish Church never forgets, and it was well that Rabelais' life was not prolonged. He went further than contempt for the trappings of Christianity; he rejected it altogether. He hoped to cure the evil of religion by spreading real knowledge, by bringing Priestcraft into disrepute, by widening the boundaries of thought. It was his desire that his writings should be read, as they have been for half a millennium. To read rationalistic thought is to think rationally, and is the first step towards Freethought. Rabelais knew as much as any man of his time, but he carried the weight of all his learning with a smile. Liberty was his sovereign specific for the ills of his time. Finding his contemporaries bound with chains of their own manufacture, it was his life-purpose to break the fetters and set them free. The wonder is that such a voice should have emerged from the cell of the medieval monk into the busy turmoil of the workaday world.

MIMNERMUS

Atheism in Harley Street

I HAVE never been able to locate that popular figure of fiction and anecdote, the Village Atheist—as portrayed by the Christian. Even as a caricature he is out of order, for caricature is a very high form of art, and is characterized by some pertinent reference to the original. We shall, I think, seek in vain some real life representative of the drivelling songster of *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*.

The modern Christian, however, had better see what he can make of the Atheist of the science laboratory, of the philosophical chair, or of Harley Street. There are many publicly known, flesh-and-blood examples, so he need not be short of material. Unfortunately for him, though, his fantasies will this time have to pass the test of being matched with realities, and it will be more difficult to fob us off with an unlearned cobbler who is thankful and has no-one to thank, or an illiterate cowman who bellows for Jesus as he lies a-dying.

Now the Atheist philosopher, or scientist, arouses the violent hostility of the Christian to a degree exactly proportionate to his outspokenness. Atheism like Bosanquet's and MacTaggart's passes unnoticed: it was incidental to their philosophy, and not made into a special point or given other than formal expression. It never reached the people. It was socially innocuous. The church was equanimous.

The storm of abuse—minus argument—hurled at the militantly Atheist *Psychology and Religion*, by Dr. D. Forsyth, of Harley Street, offers an interesting contrast. Forsyth was sufficiently amused—and instructed—to make a collection of the choicest phrases and epithets, and published them in the second edition. Forsyth had committed the unpardonable sin of writing, not a philosophical treatise, but an account which could be read by any fifth-former.

With Forsyth, too, there can be no compromise between science and religion. History, he finds, shows them to be two conflicting aspects of human activity. Their aims are "incompatible and irreconcilable."

After outlining their historical conflict, à la Draper, he concludes:—

When we compare the histories of Christianity and Science we are struck by an apparent relationship between them. As the influence of the one rises that of the other falls. Also, the period of the full development of the one coincides with the period of the practical extinction of the other.

The reason for this, he finds, is that under the complete domination of religion no energy is left for cultural purposes: science has throughout depended on freedom of thought. And in social amelioration, he says, Christianity never leads, but always follows; the conscience of the Church is always moved from outside. "Civilization can be guided by religion or by science, but not by both."

As a Freudian, he sees religion as an obsessional neurosis, motivated by a sense of sin and propitiation. The idea of God is connected with that of the earthly father (or nearest authority), whose admonitions survive as "conscience." Consequently a deep dependence on God, a Heavenly Father, in after-life indicates a part failure to mature.

Prof. G. Burniston Brown gives expression to the same idea (*Philosophy*, January, 1938):—

It has always seemed to me that "good" and "bad" applied to actions are learned when we are children and mean roughly, "pleasing or displeasing to Mama or Papa or Nanny," and that when we grow up we drop Mama and Nanny and change Papa into God. But God, being a hypothetical entity, can be made to like what we please and has in the past, for instance, liked human slavery. At the present time it is not quite certain whether this hypothesis likes birth-control. Therefore, even for those who believe in theism the question of what is a good act degenerates into the question of what is pleasing to a hypothesis, and to those who do not require this hypothesis, it is meaningless.

Dependence may also take the form of mediation: "Through Jesus Christ our Lord" is the equivalent of the child's request to his mother, "Ask daddy for me."

It will be seen that the Roman Catholic Church possesses a twofold appeal lacked by Protestantism; namely, God the Father and also the Mother of God.

And so the infantile habit of dependence survives as prayer, petitionary or propitiatory. It can originate, Forsyth maintains, in the magic belief that words have a potency in the outside world. Magic he finds to be very closely connected with religion, and children are easy victims. This is not hard to follow: the infant who cries suddenly finds his wants appeased. He comes to associate crying with appeasement of want. A conditioned response is established very like the behaviorist's (It has been shown that Psycho-Analysis has much in common with Behaviourism.)

The phenomenon of conversion is dealt with by Forsyth as essentially one of adolescence, a view held also by Prof. de Sanctis (*Religious Conversion*, 1927):—

Psychologically the phenomenon is none other than the new strong tide of sexual feeling that accompanies puberty, being checked in its usual course and deflected into religion. The check comes from an undue sense of guilt about sexual matters, and this is the outcome of a correspondingly undue strictness in the child's earlier training.

This experience of "Christ entering the heart" is thus misplaced sexual feeling. Conversion is preceded by a feeling of sin, and of revulsion from it; then comes a crisis, bringing subsequent peacefulness, a process well known to other religions. The sense of sin reaches its maximum in melancholic insanity,

¹ See *Everyman's Psychology* (Sir John Adams).

and is at the root of the psychology of the doctrine of atonement. He finds the "mystic experience" also to be sexual, "another instance of misplaced and unsatisfied sexual desire. In view of this it is instructive that mystics attach great importance to a period of sexual abstinence as a preliminary and aid to getting themselves into the mystic state." There are actually Mohammedan, and other, recipes for mysticism.

Forsyth agrees with previous inquirers in finding the behaviour of nuns susceptible to sexual interpretation, in, for instance, their adoration of Jesus, to whom they are symbolically married by ring. He acknowledges that

Many other subjects might be taken to illustrate the contradictions between science and religion, and the same conclusion of irreconcilability reached. It is not true to say there is no conflict. . . . Not only does a conflict exist, but it is an antagonism amounting to incompatibility. Modern civilization has no alternative but to make choice between them. It must plan either for the cultivation of religion at the expense of science, or for developing science at the cost of religion. At the present day only a fraction of the total of human energy that is available for social enterprise is being utilized in the service of science; very much of it is still running to waste in the interest of religion.

All these many centuries religion has been accepted as mankind's comfort . . . but it is plainly decaying all around us, and religious faith has grown cold. Psycho-Analysis has severed its very roots, by showing that it belongs to the unreal and the fantasmal, and that it bears all the marks of a child mentality.

G. H. TAYLOR

(To be concluded)

A Whale of a Tumult over Jonah!

AUSTRALIA has recently been treated—in fact, is still being treated—to a religious discussion through the daily press that must be unique in the history of practically every country.

It all arose in a very simple way.

"The story of Jonah and the Whale," said Dr. Wand (Anglican Archbishop of Brisbane), "is only a piece of propaganda." Dr. Wand was speaking in Sydney at the centenary celebrations of Christ Church St. Laurence. "It is not a true story," he continued; "and it is absurd to think it is. It is pure missionary propaganda."

Propaganda!

Dr. Wand could certainly have been much more explicit in the use of this word. Propaganda in what respect? The only way in which I can construe the story as propaganda is in the sense of proclaiming the crudities and stupidities of the Bible to the simplest intelligence. I am all the more inclined to this view because of a further statement made by Dr. Wand. "It is wrong," he added, "to believe that everything in the Bible is true."

Of course there was immediately an hysterical outburst by the fundamentalists—in other words, the hillbillies of the present-day religious world.

"Church leaders questioning the veracity of the Bible," declared Evangelist R. Greenhalgh, at a mid-day prayer service, "should resign. If they doubt the Word of God they should quit. I believe every word in the Bible."

There were numerous others who expressed themselves to the same effect. It is sufficient to cite merely one example.

"Archbishop Wand's statement that the story of Jonah and the Whale is only propaganda," said Pastor T. M. Kirkwood (Church of Christ, Naremburn), "is tantamount to calling God Himself a liar. Such statements give rise to the fear that in the Christian Church are to be found some of the most shameful, barefaced acts of spiritual brigandage. The Bible is a full revelation from God to man. To declare otherwise is simply to set oneself up as a higher critic than the Scriptures. If part of

the Bible is true and part false—as Archbishop Wand declares—how are we to know the false from the true? Such teaching as this only weakens the faith of vast numbers of people. As the result of such teaching as the Archbishop gives, the churches to-day are empty of young people."

On the other hand, first in support of Archbishop Wand was Dr. C. V. Pilcher (Anglican Coadjutor Bishop of Sydney). "In the Old Testament," remarked Dr. Pilcher, "there are some appalling views expressed about women. Perhaps it is just as well that nobody reads these parts of the Bible very thoroughly." But Dr. Pilcher was far from being satisfied at expressing himself in this brief way. A week later, he proceeded to disclose himself—to the extent of practically a whole page in *The Sunday Sun* (Sydney)—in a manner that amounted to little less than a reputation of the Bible generally.

A few extracts from what he had to say may well be given.

"When," said Dr. Pilcher, "the fight was on under Abraham Lincoln for the abolition of American slavery, the slaves and their friends used the argument that, because slavery was found in the Bible, slavery was all right.

"This argument was used, although Hebrew slavery, with all its ameliorations, was a cruel thing.

"Thus, a father, if he wanted money, might sell his own daughter as a slave (Exodus xxi. 7); while an owner might flog his slave to death with impunity, provided that the man or woman did not die under the rod, but soon afterwards (Exodus xxi. 20-21).

"At certain periods of history, sects have arisen arguing that polygamy was lawful. The inference is simple. 'King Solomon in the Bible was a polygamist. So why not I?'

"Much of the old cruelty to children could be justified from the Old Testament.

"If you had objected that torture was scarcely the way to instil into a boy love of goodness and love of learning, Proverbs xxiii. 14, was always at hand: 'Withhold not correction from the child. Thou shalt beat him with the rod.'

"In Deuteronomy xxiv., we read that if a husband found 'some unseemly thing' in his wife, he could write out a document divorcing her, and send her from under his roof. The husband was plaintiff, judge, and executioner in one and the poor woman had no redress.

"One of the leading Rabbis, who lived about the time of Christ, argued that a husband could be said to find 'some unseemly thing' in his first wife, if he later saw a more beautiful woman, and desired to marry her."

So much, for the moment, regarding Dr. Pilcher's condemnation of the Bible. I shall return to him later. I here wish to cite the remarkable support promptly forthcoming for Dr. Wand and Dr. Pilcher—remarkable, that is, for a body of men who continue to get their living by expounding the alleged truths of the Bible.

For example:—

Right Rev. R. C. Halse (Bishop of Riverina): "I agree with Bishop Pilcher in every particular."

Right Rev. W. H. W. Stevenson (Bishop of Grafton): "Bishop Pilcher's views are most timely and valuable."

Right Rev. E. H. Burgmann (Bishop of Goulburn): "I entirely approve of all that Bishop Pilcher has said. It is high time that the reading public should realize that many of the popular views held about the Bible are no longer tenable by enlightened churchmen. The view that the Bible is an infallible book simply means that a vast number of intelligent people refuse to have anything to do with it at all."

Right Rev. De Witt Batty (Bishop of Newcastle): "I have read Bishop Pilcher's views with much interest, and find myself in complete agreement with them."

Right Rev. J. A. Moyes (Bishop of Armidale): "I agree wholeheartedly with Bishop Pilcher."

Canon T. C. Hammond (Moore Theological College): "Bishop Pilcher talks about 'appalling statements' regarding women in the Old Testament; but the real trouble is—not that the statements are 'appalling'—but that they are true. For instance, the Bible could not say a man had only one wife when it was known that he had four or five."

Rev. Stuart Watts (Editor *The Church Standard*): "The overwhelming majority of the church's leaders and thinkers hold Bishop Pilcher's views."

Let us return, now, to Bishop Pilcher, and have a word or two as to how he seeks to reconcile his continued belief in the Bible side by side with the views expressed by him. The line he follows is precisely that adopted by all the others who have been quoted in support of him. But it is a process of reasoning which, I feel sure, will carry very little conviction.

"We now know," says Bishop Pilcher, "that the Old Testament is the story of progressive revelation.

"A good educator will lead a child step by step, gradually advancing from the known to the unknown. So God took the Hebrew people in all their primitive savagery, and educated them until they were ready to be the people from whom Christ came.

"When, therefore, we discover primitive ideas of right and wrong in the early pages of Scripture, we must not say, 'It is in the Bible, and so it is right for me.' We ought rather to say, 'These are the crude ideas from which God gradually led his people into a higher morality.'

Progressive revelation!

That, of course, is what it all boils down to. But this is an argument that manifestly defeats itself. If we are justified in rejecting portions of the Bible, for the sole reason that we have advanced with the years, what portions remain to be accepted with the still further enlightenment that future ages must bring with them? No; this is a shift resorted to by Bishop Pilcher and his colleagues that simply will not work. A pungent comment, with a good deal of bearing on the point at issue, was made by Archbishop Charlton (Woollahra). "If," he remarks, "some people were able to cut out all they wanted out of the Old Testament, there would soon be no Book left."

Progressive revelation, in short, simply means progressive rejection—that is, still further and further rejection until nothing is left of the whole Biblical structure.

Brought into the present controversy was A. N. Colefax (Lecturer in Zoology at the Sydney University).

"Scientifically speaking," he said, "Jonah could never have survived his internment in the whale. To swallow Jonah, the whale would have had to suck him so deep under the water that he would have been drowned; if he were not drowned, he would have been suffocated inside the whale; and if he were neither drowned nor suffocated, the whale's digestive juices would have killed him. Scientifically, I repeat, the story is ridiculous."

The Jonah story, it will be noted, has been the focal-point of a collective expression of views that must prove a staggering jolt to the church, particularly in the light of the fact that the widest publicity has been given them through the Australian daily press.

But is the whale fiction in any sense different from what is to be found in the Bible from cover to cover? And is the Old Testament, in this respect, very much different from the New Testament? Both teem with the incredible and ridiculous.

Take the fable of Christ feeding—I think the figures are—5,000 people on three loaves of bread and five little fish. Even after the appetite of this multitude had been satisfied there remained enough fish to fill twelve big baskets! The feat, we are given to understand, was the result of a miracle, performed by Christ. But if it was within His power to work such a miracle why did he suffer crucifixion? Clearly, if He had so desired, He could have escaped this with the greatest ease.

What have the "progressive revelationists"—since they are so emphatically in revolt against the story of Jonah—to say on this score?

Finally, it is decidedly enlightening to find the clergy—those with Bishop Pilcher and those against him—in such violent conflict. Collectively are they pleading to religionists to believe a Book respecting the truth of which they are themselves utterly unable to agree. It is a pretty picture they present—a picture that must inevitably evoke wide derision, and in that way greatly help in dissolving the blighting cloud of religious superstition.

FRANK HILL

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Napoleon

I ALWAYS read Mimmermus's articles with the greatest interest and pleasure, and have read his "Napoleon" with all the more, because it is a subject I know from A to Z. I had to learn it as a youth. The strange thing is that the more I study Napoleon, the more I realize what an over-rated soldier and statesman he was. The Republican armies which he took over, when he assumed command in his early days, were little short of invincible in spirit and moral: they had been raised by that mighty genius, Sadi Carnot, and had learned to fight and die under the Republican generals Lazare Hoche, Jourdan, Pichegru and the Royalist, Du Mouriez: Bonaparte spent his career in ruining these armies.

Bonaparte's genius is built upon his early campaign in Italy when opposed to foolish popinjays, as the Austrian generals were, who, moreover, were always jealous and squabbling with one another. He was also entitled to high praise for his campaign of Austerlitz. But he was on the verge of defeat at Marengo when saved by Desaix, while at Jena, Davoust is entitled to far more credit for the victory than Bonaparte. At Eylau, Napoleon got the worst of it, but managed to save his reputation at Friedland some months later.

It is very doubtful whether the Archduke Charles of Austria did not prove himself a better general than Napoleon in 1809 in the Wagram campaign. And the Russian campaign of 1812 proved Napoleon to have been a third-rate soldier; he actually lost some 100,000 horses from starvation, before firing a shot, and he lost his huge army in the retreat from Moscow without the glimmer of hope of a success. Ney said of him: "Why does he not go back to Paris and play the Emperor, since he cannot or will not fight as a soldier?"

After the wretched campaign of Dresden and Leipzig, Napoleon showed some faint signs of military skill in France, at Montmirail and Champaubert, but he only beat Russians and Austrians; and history has taught us that they can never win a battle.

The strange thing about the legend of Napoleon is that French staff-officers realize what a fraud he is. One of the greatest French generals in the war of 1914-1918 said to me: "Of course we French generals cannot afford publicly to express our contempt of his strategy and tactics, but have you ever been to the mill at Ligny where Napoleon passed the day of the 16th June, 1815? From there, you can see how stupid and incompetent Napoleon was in the Waterloo campaign!"

Personally I have not the faintest doubt that, if Wellington had commanded the French army and Napoleon the allies on the 16th and 18th June, 1815, the French must have won easily, as their army was infinitely superior to that of the allies in artillery, cavalry, equipment: there were only 25,000 English troops on the field and many of these were militia. Moreover, whereas Napoleon commanded the same number of troops as at Austerlitz, he only occupied about one third of the front, consequently his infantry were getting in the way of his cavalry and his cavalry were always riding over his own infantry.

All this makes quite miraculous what Mimmermus describes as the triumph of the Napoleonic legend.

Napoleon never in his life carried out a retreat which can be compared with Luxembourg's retreat from Utrecht in the face of three armies stronger than his own in 1673.

Personally, amongst French generals, I regard Turenne, Luxembourg and Maurice de Saxe as infinitely greater military commanders than Napoleon and, amongst his contemporaries, I prefer Hoche, Jourdan, Bernadotte and Davoust.

I wish I had ever known such a good thing to bet upon in my racing days as Wellington versus Napoleon in a battle. It would have been a real good thing to lay 3 to 1 on Wellington every time.

HERVEY DE MONTMORENCY

Every reform, however necessary, will by weak minds be carried to an excess that itself will need reforming.

Coleridge.

Acid Drops

Sir Cyril Norwood, late headmaster of Harrow, thinks that owing to the strain of this war on the country, the public school system will have to go. He regrets this because he says "they have done their job and produced leaders," and after the war he thinks that it will not be possible for parents to bring up their children in the old way." This forecast may be good or bad; we select it here as a first-class example of the cock-eyed reasoning that dominates so many people. Many "leaders" have come from public schools, therefore we have to thank the public schools for having given us "leaders," therefore the decline of public schools may involve a loss of "leaders," or at least a greater difficulty in getting them. One has only to read the published praise of public schools from the stupid "Waterloo was won on the playgrounds of Eton," to the most recent of eulogies to realize that we are not overstating the position.

Now no one with any intelligence ever doubted that many leaders in many walks of life have come from the public schools. The case against the snobocracy bred in British public school life rests upon a different ground altogether. There are, we imagine, about the same proportion of able boys, and of fools, in public schools as in the "common" schools of the country. But in too many cases the fool that has attended a public school is preferred, and the intelligent graduate from a "common" school is handicapped in the competition for posts that involve "leadership." Let anyone compare the proportion of public school boys who hold public positions with those emanating from Council Schools, also let the fact be remembered that in open competitions candidates from Council Schools more than hold their own, and the artificial nature of the leadership supplied by public schools will be seen at once. One need not argue further. Those engaged in public life know, as parents themselves know, that to come from a public school is an aid to office in many directions, with very little regard to personal worth.

Alas for Christian faith! Special arrangements are made in the Vatican for the Pope to enter an air-raid shelter if a raid on Rome is threatened. But the sale of sacred objects to guard one from peril will continue. So also will the sale of sacred candles to protect laymen. And in England St. Gertrude's Church, South Croydon, (Roman Catholic) has its alms box fitted with an electric alarm in case any unhallowed hands make a dive for its contents. One man who evidently thought the priest in charge would trust to the power of God for protection is now doing three months' hard labour for his credulity.

There is an old maxim about honour among thieves. We do not see why the same rule should not apply with regard to courtesy between those in the same line of business. But the other evening we just managed to catch one of the B.B.C.'s favourite parsons, Rev. W. H. Elliott, offering thanks to "the only wise God." It is not polite to say that all the gods but one are silly. None of them have ever struck us as having any wisdom worth boasting about.

A suggestion comes from the U.S.A. that the President should have a "Secretary of Religion." That means, of course, a nice job for some cleric. We should like to know why? There is no religion in the American Constitution, however much religion there may be in American constitutions. And those who drew up the Constitution were very seriously concerned with seeing that religion held no favoured place in State affairs. Of course, this counted too much on Christians acting honourably where their religion was concerned, but the intention of the designers was quite clear, and had their successors been honourable men where religion was concerned, such a suggestion as the appointment of a "Secretary of Religion" would have been impossible.

The parson who is responsible for this suggestion says that "political leaders have come to realize that democracy cannot be saved without the help of religion, yet they can do little to halt the wave of Secularism in this country." We don't know who the political leaders are who feel this way, we imagine it is some of the friends of the clergyman who wishes to see his own form of Christianity officially established. But religion did not save democracy in Italy, Germany, or elsewhere. And even in this country, while there have been many working for democracy who were religious, there were always far more who were against it. The truth is that religion is a danger to any form of genuinely progressive political and social life. Fundamental religious beliefs are rooted in the past and the future is dreaded so soon as it promises a change. And even when belief is specific religious doctrines goes, there remains the religious type of mind, which often becomes more dangerous because it encourages the persistence of old evils under new names. What America needs is not more religion, but a clearing out of the religious influence still obtaining in high places.

Pastor W. B. Everett of St. Mary's Free Will Baptist Church (no less!), New Bern, North Carolina, complained that the Government violated the Constitution by refusing to allow 44 women seamstresses engaged in relief work to say the "Lord's prayer" in Government time. The women pleaded that it took them only half-to-three-quarters of a minute to say it in unison. . . . N. Carolina's Government should consider the culpability of "The Lord" in de raiding it of some three to four hours working time per annum. And, incidentally, our own (British) Government might ponder the far greater misappropriation of the *people's* time by its periodical prayers in parliament.

Lord Zetland is Secretary for India. On the authority of the diarist of the *Evening Standard* "He believes in dreams. And recently his faith has been strengthened by events. Two of his friends received 'inspiration' that outsiders would win certain races, and backed them successfully at long odds." Reincarnation "has also impressed Lord Zetland," adds the diarist; "Twice since he has been Secretary for India he has asked the Viceroy to investigate reported cases, but each time he was disappointed to find that they were bogus." . . . We have had no news of this in any report from the India Office. Nor can we trace any estimate or cost there or in India regarding such investigations. Perhaps Lord Zetland and the Viceroy had some spare time in spite of the urgent and vital question of Indian rule to-day? Questions insoluble by dreams and not likely to depend on reincarnation! One is again left wondering at the mentality of many of those in high places. Perhaps we shall next hear that Lord Zetland has appointed an official fortune-teller, and an inspired tipster-in-chief. Still we think it would be easy to parallel the mentality of Lord Zetland with many of our own officials—the Lord Chancellor, for example.

Lord De La Warr, our President of the Board of Education, has made the profound and very original discovery that the children are the raw material of the future. Of course they are, but the importance of children does not lie in the fact of their being raw material, but in the use made of it. Flour and water, spices and fruit, form the raw material of a pudding. But whether the mixture is of any use depends upon the cook. If those who are at present agitating for more religion in the schools are to be responsible, the "raw material" will become largely wasted material.

Some of the religious papers are horrified at the Birmingham magistrates granting permission for places of amusement to be opened on Good Friday. Canon Rogers says it is an outrage. Why? No Christian need go, and if others would rather go to a place of amusement instead of going to Church, why should anyone object? But that is the Christian all over. He cannot be comfortably miserable himself unless he has the feeling that he is compelling others to be miserable also.

And why "Good Friday"? Religiously it is the anniversary of the day on which one third of God Almighty was crucified. One would think that those who believe in this being the anniversary of an historic event would call it *bad* Friday, or *Black* Friday. There are people in this country who still mourn the death of Charles the First. But they do not call that date *good*. There is the anniversary of the death of Nelson, but that is not called a *good* date either. But the Christian says, apparently, it doesn't matter a damn about the crucifixion of Jesus, we profit by his death, therefore it is a *good* anniversary. Common decency among Christians ought to have wiped out that *good*.

At the Annual Meeting of the Church Literature Association, Mr. Maurice Reckett declared that it is our duty to learn from the war:—

They must realize that the war is not an isolated disaster, but just the kind of thing that one would expect in the present world order. A war that has turned its back on God is experiencing the wrath of man, and there can be no lasting peace without the return to God.

We could better appreciate Mr. Reckett's position if he would explain the God imitating the turning of the back by his permitting the slaughter of those who believe in him as well as of those who do not. After all, everyone has not turned their backs on God, and why should God act so peevishly as to permit those who follow him to suffer?

The Rector of Weymouth has offered a (more or less) valuable contribution to the settlement of the world's troubles. He points out that:—

We have witnessed a serious moral and spiritual declension in all the old so-called Christian countries. Fewer Sunday School scholars, Bible class members, clergy and ministers are ordained. Church attendance is not nearly so good as in the days previous to 1914.

And he suggests calling

a conference of Bible students to find out from the Scriptures themselves what is God's plan for the Church, for Israel, and for the Kingdom? A conference of devout students and exponents of the whole Bible.

Now if a representative body of all Christian sects from all over the world could be brought together we feel fairly certain that something would happen—probably a new war that would put the present one in the background. But the idea of calling a world conference to decide just what God's message means—some thousands of years after the message was delivered is certainly rather striking. What a pity God hadn't a capable working journalist at his side when he gave his message to the world!

A writer in the *Church of England Newspaper*, says that in the world crisis people "naturally" turned to the Christian Church to find out what its leaders had to say. A superb piece of Christian egotism. Personally we quite failed to notice any world-wide or general feeling in any country as to what the Churches had to say. People discussed food, armaments, business and a score of other things. But we failed to notice any particular concern as to what the Churches had to say in the matter. Of course, the B.B.C.—still, we understand, under the influence of that first-class narrow-minded religious bigot and master of "fakes," Sir John Reith—has put on an extra dose of religious services, and engaged a number of men making appeals for the Churches under the thin guise of sociological or international studies, but otherwise the general body of the public bothered less about the clergy since the war than it did before.

In a Catholic newspaper we read a translation of a "Lenten Pastoral" by the (German) Bishop of Trier, Mgr. Bornewasser, in which he says:—

This year's Lent falls in a time which is extremely serious for all of us. We live through events which may

change the whole face of the world. We Christians should learn from them day by day to make our prayers even more fervent in order to implore God that He may give a blessed peace to our people and fatherland, and peace and freedom to our Holy Mother the Church, that she may be allowed to fulfil her divine task for the well-being of the whole German people. . . .

—meaning evidently that so long as God provides a "peace" acceptable to Germany and the Vatican, the rest of the peoples can go to blazes: where indeed they seem likely to go if Hitler wins.

The annual statistics of the Congregational Church Union of England reveal, like all other churches, a serious diminution in every department. Here are the totals, showing in brackets the decrease in each case:—

Places of worship, 4,457 (10),
Members, 416,442 (3,119)
Scholars, 366,973 (12,023)
Teachers, 51,584 (1,436)
Lay preachers, 3,696 (87)

The Congregational body, with its Independent pulpits, is far less fundamentalistic than many other Christian denominations. This does not save its decline. So far from war causing a heavy increase in religious enthusiasm, as so many of the clergy pretend to believe, all who know anything about the 1939 soldier will agree that for all the compulsory parades there is less religion in the Army than ever before. Even the "Woodbine Willies" of 1939 realize this fact.

Dr. Townley Lord, D.D., pokes fun at the phraseology of the formula with which, at the Council of Chalcedon, the Church described Christ's personality thus:—

One and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only begotten, in two natures inconfusedly, unchangeably, indivisibly, inseparably, the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved and concurring in one person and one substance, not parted or divided into two persons . . . and so on.

The simple fact which Dr. Lord ignores is that it is absolutely impossible to describe so monstrously unnatural a thing as a "God-Man" except by equally monstrous and unnatural language. To talk as Dr. Lord does about

the reign of divine love exercised by God in His grace over human hearts believing in His love, and constrained thereby to yield Him grateful affection and devoted service.

is merely to translate Holy gibberish of the Middle Ages into Holy gibberish of current days. Dr. Lord, seeing the absurdity of imagining that God has devised a "reign of love" in Europe for instance, falls back on a God who can only "exercise" His love invisibly and incalculably inside Mr. Hitler's and other people's hearts. The world has always been ready to "yield affection and service" to the Divine Fiction they have imagined. What we need most to-day is wisdom and human kindness unadulterated by supernatural diversions.

The Polish Press Bureau records the alleged fact that when Nazi bombs struck, "Our Lady" of the Polish Lourdes they failed to explode. What a pity that the same divine guidance did not see to it that bombs acted in a similar way when they struck the houses of the poor people.

By the way it is rather curious that those people in this country who are so concerned with fulminating against the war because of the treatment of countries outside Russia and Germany, have quite failed to notice the wholesale robbery of the Polish working-class, and their transportation to virtual slavery in Germany.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

To Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—Miss L. F. Brown, 118. 8d.; A. Thirwuelangam, 108.

T. W. THOMPSON.—Sorry, but we do not care at present for more articles exposing Spiritualism. So many of these exposures move along the same lines that we expect very many of our readers will have lost interest in them.

A. HAWCROFT.—We hope to be able to make a definite announcement soon. Many unexpected difficulties have intervened.

N. CHARLTON.—Pleased to learn that your lecture in Burnley went off so satisfactorily.

N. TURNER.—The N.S.S. is always willing to supply speakers for meetings on suitable occasions. Glad to know that Mr. Rosetti's visit gave so much pleasure to those present.

C. WILLIAMS.—Sorry we cannot publish your diatribe against science, because of the use to which scientific discoveries are put. Science in itself is neither good nor bad. Knowledge may always be used to bad ends as well as good. The wireless gives us much that is good, but it also gives the moaning and groaning of a Bing Crosby and the inanities of a Syd Walker.

H. PURVY.—Thanks. See "Sugar Plums."

A. SELLS.—We agree with you that if a young man has the honesty to tell a tribunal that he is not alone a Pacifist, but is also a coward, who would not, or could not, defend himself against attack, the tribunal might well release him from military service. We imagine that most military men would agree with us in this. We are taking as much rest as we can, but work has a habit of pouring in from unexpected quarters.

A. WILLIAMS.—The only reason we have for saying that education is compulsory in this country is that—it is compulsory.

J. HUMPHREY.—Copies were sent, but if some have gone astray and you will repeat the addresses others will be sent.

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

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One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

Sugar Plums

To-day (Sunday, March 17) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Picture House, Market Street, Manchester. The lecture will commence at 3 o'clock. Admission is free, but there will be reserved seats at 1s. each. The subject will be "Dictators and Democracies." By a slip of the pen we wrote last week that the meeting would be held in the Picture House, Piccadilly. The correct address is Market Street. On the last Sunday in March Mr. Cohen will, at Glasgow, bring his winter lecturing to a close.

As announced the Annual Conference of the National Secular Society will take place on Whit-Sunday at Manchester. This is about as central a position for the country as one could wish, and we hope Branches and members will be present in force. Meanwhile, we remind all concerned that resolutions for the Agenda to be placed before the Conference should be sent without delay to the Gen. Secretary, Mr. R. H. Rosetti. Individual members are entitled to place resolutions on the Agenda as well as Branches. The fact that a Branch has forwarded a resolution will not prevent any member of that Branch placing

Freethinkers and the War

ALL men entering the Army, Navy or Air Force must answer a question as to their religion. *The official in charge is legally bound to record the answer as given*—Atheist, Agnostic, Freethinker, Rationalist or whatever the recruit may choose to call himself. Questioning by the official in charge is gratuitous, and unauthorized. The recruit should refuse to sign any document where his reply to the question of "Religion" is not accurately recorded. Those members of the forces who have been wrongly entered as belonging to some Church, or where they have changed their opinions since entering one of the Services have the legal right to have the record altered in accordance with their views.

If any difficulty is experienced in securing recognition of these legal rights, the National Secular Society, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, should be communicated with.

a resolution—provided it is in order—on the Agenda in his own name.

There are several kinds of meanness in the world. There is meanness, damned meanness and Christian meanness. We present an example of the latter variety, which deserves to be placed in a category of its own. The letter really explains itself. It appeared in the *Belfast Telegraph* :—

ATHEIST PROTESTS

SEEKING A MARRIAGE CERTIFICATE

"FINED AND PILLORIED"

IF NAME OF CHURCH NOT GIVEN

Sir,—Is it not primarily for intellectual freedom that we are fighting the Nazis? I would bring to your readers' notice an injustice that I am sure the majority of them do not know exists in the law as it stands in relation to marriage in Ireland.

When making application for a marriage certificate I told the registrar in response to his inquiry that I was not a member of or attended any church. He informed me that unless I gave him the name of a Church it would cost me £7 to have the fact advertised in the Press.

That I should have to pay this is nothing short of a fine or penalty for my non-religious convictions.

Simply because I am sufficiently straightforward to say that I am not a Christian, I am to pay £7, that the church-goer, or mentally back-sliding agnostic avoids by simply mentioning the name of a church that he seldom or never attends.

If the position were reversed, there would be a great cry from the Churches for freedom of thought and equality of treatment.

I commend my case to all fair-minded Christians to see that this iniquity is removed.—Yours, etc.,

"ATHEIST"

The writer of the letter says truthfully that this is a fine for intellectual straightforwardness. If he had been content to go to a Church and tell, or act a lie, well and good, but to be honest is something for which the authorities, in the interest of the Church, inflict a heavy fine. We are not sure, it must be said, that this is the law in Belfast, but we would not where Christianity is concerned be sure that the young man who wished to be married was told the truth, or whether it was a case of lying for the glory of God, but if it is the law in Northern Ireland, then it is a disgrace to the country. It means that those who object to the religious ceremony but who cannot afford the fine of £7 must go through a hypocritical ceremony so that the power of the Church may be maintained. We wonder whether this Government of ours that is conducting a war, ostensibly on behalf of freedom, can spare a few minutes to consider some way of preventing the monstrous act of injustice disclosed in the above letter.

Odd Remarks about Odd Remarks

THERE is one lesson which I think it should be the duty of every school to teach its pupils—and to continue to teach them until it becomes an integral part of their everyday thinking. The lesson is that words are as capable of leading us to the most absurd and false conclusions as they are of helping us to reason correctly.

The purpose of teaching this lesson should be obvious. We, as human beings, presumably wish to make the best of life. Every sphere of our activities is tremendously dependent upon the use of words. How then can we make the best of life if we remain constantly subject to the dangers of crooked thinking (and therefore of wrong action) which beset us every day as a direct consequence of the words we hear, read, and use ourselves?

How is the lesson to be taught? Teachers themselves are, as often as not, even more word-bound than their pupils. Their very profession makes them so. Their duty is to impart, by the spoken or written word, set information which they are not expected to criticize. And, having imparted it, their function is then to criticize, not themselves, but those to whom the information has been given. So, for reasons not dissimilar from those which affect parsons and politicians, we find that schoolmasters and mistresses become dogmatic, and unaccustomed to criticize the very instrument—language—which they are compelled to use upon every occasion.

Yet, if education is to improve and to become progressively more useful to succeeding generations, a beginning must be made somewhere. And it is the teachers themselves who must learn to develop word-consciousness before we can hope to evolve and formulate a practical critique of language which may be taught in schools. At present speech and language, upon which all education depends, are used by teachers and pupils alike almost as uncritically and irresponsibly as though they were impeccable gifts of God; whereas in fact they constitute probably the most prolific source of misunderstanding, error, and strife, ever known to man.

True, we are taught in a superficial kind of way how not to misuse this "perfect" gift. We are taught, for example, that the correct plural of *mouse* is not *mouses*, but *mice*; that we should not say *he done it* when we mean *he did it*; that we should not pronounce *race* as *rice*; and so on. But what pupil, or teacher for that matter, is ever asked to analyse such statements as "two and two make four," or "patriotism is a virtue," with a view to determining their truth (or untruth) in fact—or even whether they make sense. And, if they make sense, why they do so. And if they are true or untrue, how one may prove them so.

Put in this way, some teachers might airily dismiss the whole thing by saying: "My dear sir, those are questions of logic. And logic is much too abstruse a subject to teach children." Unfortunately, they are also very much questions of *fact*. And despite the use of the terrifying word *logic*, it remains true that it is just as easy, given the right method, to teach a child to learn its multiplication tables as it is to teach it why the statement "two and two make four" is true, and how it can be proved so.

But this article is not intended for children. It is intended for any adult who may have begun to realize the dangerous deceptiveness of words, and their capacity for misleading thought. More especially is it for those who appreciate the need for a new form of

instruction which, beginning with a critique of the words and phrases we use, may develop into a habit of thought-criticism that should enable us to arrive more easily and more often at correct conclusions in every sphere where language is employed.

The following quotations and comments do not profess to be faultless either as specimens of false conclusions, or as logical criticisms of them. Nor does my choice exemplify any systematic method of verbal analysis which might be adopted for the purpose of teaching. They are merely suggestive of what some of us might do by way of training ourselves to sift the wheat of sense from the chaff of nonsense when we speak, listen, read, or write. That is why I call them odd remarks about odd remarks.

(1) "Why things are as they are and not totally different is the rock upon which Science perpetually splits without knowing it." (From *The Great Amphibium*, by Joseph Needham; being four lectures on the position of religion in a world dominated by science). It seems to me that the real mystery would be if things were *not* as they are. That *would* be a nut for Science to crack! The question is, of course, not specifically a scientific one at all. It is a linguistic problem arising out of the improper use of words. And it is evidently a rock over which the author himself seems to have come a nasty cropper!

(2) "God is my Life." These words are said to be the last written by Mrs. Mary Baker Eddy, founder of Christian Science, before she died. If they are true, then since Mrs. Eddy's life came to an end shortly after writing them, we must perforce gather that God came to an end at the same time.

(3) "Murderers do not deserve a trial before being executed, because they are enemies of mankind." There are plenty of good people who would easily fall for this kind of question-begging argument. Their just indignation having been aroused by the word *murderer*, it would not readily occur to such people that to call a man a murderer does not necessarily prove that he is one. An essential part of such proof is, of course, *preliminary trial*—the very thing we are asked to deny the man.

(4) "An assumption may contain true knowledge. It does so if the assumption turns out to be correct. The fact that we cannot, at the time we make the assumption, prove that it is going to turn out true, has absolutely nothing to do with the matter. It in no way makes our knowledge false, or misleading, or in any way unsatisfactory." (From *The Theory of Knowledge and Existence*, by W. T. Stace, Litt.D.). These words make readable English and appear to make sense. In fact, however, they stand as a beautiful example of slipshod thinking arising out of the slipshod use of words. Let us analyse them.

When we make an assumption, we do not make a statement of fact. On the contrary we make a statement which, as the author admits, *may* or *may not* turn out to be fact. In other words we make a statement of *uncertain* knowledge. True knowledge is obviously knowledge that is certain, else how can we know it is true. So it follows that an assumption cannot "contain" true knowledge, though it may be "based upon" it.

Even when an assumption turns out to be correct, we cannot say that it "contains" true knowledge. For, at the very moment when what *was* an assumption is verified, it *ceases to be an assumption any longer* and becomes fact. An assumption, as such, "contains" nothing more than a statement of probability or possibility—in other words, it may be wholly untrue in the light of future events.

"The fact that we cannot, at the time we make an assumption, prove that it is going to turn out true," far from having "nothing to do with the matter," is

the most important fact of all to remember when we make assumptions. Whether the knowledge, upon which our assumptions are based, is false or otherwise, does not affect the essential uncertainty of assumptions as such. For just as it is possible to make incorrect assumptions based upon true knowledge so it is also possible to make correct assumptions based upon knowledge.

(5) "Future events are real . . . yet they are events which, theoretically, may be prevented from happening." (From *An Experiment with Time*, by J. W. Dunne). A good example of confusion of thought arising out of the slipshod use of words. Again let us analyse.

Events which have not happened, are not happening, and will not happen, can scarcely be described as real. This description can be properly applied only to those which have definitely happened (past events), are definitely happening (present events), and will definitely happen (future events). So it follows that the only future events which may legitimately be described as real are those which *will definitely happen*. How such events can be prevented, either theoretically or in any other way, I fail to see!

Past events are those of which it can be said that they *were* real; but not that they *are*, or *will be*. Present events are those of which it can be said that they *are* real; but not that they *were*, or *will be*. Future events are those of which it can be said that they *will be* real; but not that they *were* or *are*. Therefore it is a misuse of language (i.e., nonsense) to say that "Future events are real."

In addition to the meanings for the word *event* given above, language also permits us to refer to things that *may* happen as "future events." But the phrase "may happen" necessarily implies "may not happen." So if we use the words *future events* in this sense, it is clear that either (1) they *will* happen, and are therefore unpreventable, or (2) they *will not* happen, and therefore cannot be called real.

C. S. FRASER

Highways and Byways in English History

I.—HOW ENGLAND BECAME CHRISTIAN

THE English first appear in history as one of a number of Germanic peoples inhabiting the forests and creeks of the Baltic. During the fifth and sixth centuries of the Christian era the English, along with the kindred Jutes and Saxons, gradually possessed themselves of the eastern and southern parts of Britain, as far as the Severn. They were a race of savages, acquainted with agriculture and the use of metals, living in village communities, and like other pagan peoples, practising a religion which consisted in the attempted control or propitiation of the unknown forces of nature. They worshipped Woden, the "all-father," from whom their royal families were supposed to be descended, Thunor or Thor, the god of thunder and rain, Frigg, the goddess of fertility and marriage, and various minor divinities, and they believed strongly in magic and witchcraft. They had priests; but the power of this class does not seem to have approached that which the Druids had enjoyed in Celtic Britain, or which the Catholic priesthood enjoyed later in Christian England.

By the closing years of the sixth century Ethelbert, King of Kent, had succeeded in imposing his suzerainty on all the Anglo-Saxon princes south of the

Humber. Under this monarch England was brought, for the first time since the departure of the Roman legions, into regular contact with Europe. Out of the confusion which followed the collapse of the Roman Empire in Gaul there had emerged at the end of the fifth century the far-flung kingdom of Clovis the Frank, the first Germanic King to be baptized into the Catholic Church. Having thereby enlisted clerical support against his rivals, who had the misfortune to be Arian heretics, Clovis succeeded in extending his realm at their expense from the North Sea to the Pyrenees. His great-granddaughter, Bertha, became the wife of Ethelbert of Kent, who must have been constantly impressed by the enormous advantages, secular if not spiritual, which his wife's family had derived from their adhesion to the Catholic faith. The new times demanded a new religion. Woden and Thor might be good enough for savages in the German forests; Catholic Christianity, which inculcated non-resistance to Kings and threatened the rebellious with pains and penalties that did not end with death, was a fitter ally for the strong feudal monarchy which Ethelbert was trying to build up.

In 596 Pope Gregory the Great commissioned Augustine and a company of monks to preach Christianity to the English; and in 597 they landed in Thanet. We learn from Bede how Ethelbert, who had not quite decided on the relative merits of the old and new religions, required these strange foreign priests to meet him in the open air in case they should put a spell on him if invited indoors; how after his misgivings were overcome, he allowed them to settle and preach at his capital, Canterbury; and how Canterbury became an archiepiscopal see. We learn how Gregory particularly directed that pagan temples should not be destroyed, but be consecrated as churches, and that even pagan sacrifices should not be abolished outright, but be turned to Christian use, the animals formerly sacrificed to "the devil" being henceforth killed and eaten "to the glory of God." The change of religion was thus affected with the least possible disturbance of popular customs; and in England, as elsewhere, a considerable body of pagan practices, such as dancing round the maypole, crowning the harvest queen, and burning the Yule log, lived on with the sanction or connivance of the Church to scandalize the Puritans of a thousand years later.

There is nothing in Bede or in the *Saxon Chronicle* to suggest that the Christianized English were very different from their pagan fathers. Penda of Mercia, the only English ruler to put up a real fight for the old gods, is an interesting figure of whom we should like to know more. Bede tells us that:—

Penda did not forbid the preaching of the word even in his own kingdom of Mercia to any who would hear it. But he hated and despised those who, having embraced the faith of Christ, did not act up to that faith; for he said they were poor creatures and worthy of scorn, who scorned to obey the God in whom they believed.

Penda fell in battle in 655, after which the cause of paganism collapsed. The last stronghold of heathenism in England was the Isle of Wight. The story of its forcible suppression there is studiously ignored by standard historians. Says Bede:—

After Caedwalla became King of the West Saxons, he subdued the Isle of Wight, which till then had been wholly given to idolatry. He proceeded to massacre and exterminate all its inhabitants, and to replace them by men of his own kingdom. Though he was not yet, they say, a baptized Christian, he took a vow that if he subdued the island, he would give a fourth of the land and the booty to the Lord. He performed his vow, and bestowed the fourth part

on Bishop Wilfred, who happened to be there then on a visit, to be put to the Lord's use. And here I think I should not omit to mention that the first in the island to believe and be saved were two boys of the royal stock, brothers of Arwald, King of the island, and that these received special mercy from God. For when the enemy threatened the island, they escaped and crossed over to the neighbouring country of the Jutes. They believed that there they would be hidden from the face of the conquering King; but they were betrayed and commanded to be slain. A certain abbot and priest called Cynibert, whose monastery was not far from thence, heard of this, and came to the King, and begged of him, that if it must needs be that the boys should be slain, they might first receive the sacraments of the Christian faith. The King granted it; and the abbot himself instructed them in the word of truth, baptized them, and made them sure of entering the everlasting kingdom. Then the executioner approached; and they joyfully suffered that temporal death through which they did not doubt that they would pass to the eternal life of the soul.

The ruffianly Caedwalla afterwards abdicated his kingdom and was baptized at Rome, where he died in an odour of remarkable sanctity.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

(To be continued)

The Price We have to Pay

EVERYTHING has its price, and what we pay for anything depends upon the condition of our mind at the time the thing is within our reach, and our standard of values. If we want anything, desperately, and we are prepared to pay the price asked for it, the thing can, often enough, be ours—sooner or later. A good deal depends upon the way we go to work to attain our desired end, and the length we are ready and willing to go to satisfy our ambition.

No matter in what sphere of life we are born we are, each and everyone of us, handicapped from the outset of our career—handicapped, that is to say, by the precepts and practices of our forefathers which are bound to have their influence upon us, and to be, in a way, a part and parcel of our inheritance—and the majority of us carry this burden with us to the end.

In this respect the son of a rich man is no different from the son of a poor man: each is the product of a certain set of circumstances, a long chain of events leading up to his entry into the world, and the life of each is more or less governed by those causes.

The son of the poor man may perhaps, while still in his teens, persuade himself, or be persuaded that, because of his lowly birth, he is likely to miss something which, measured by some common standard, is considered of great value—say, one of the so-called "plums" in the professional or political or business world—and he may there and then determine that he will overcome all obstacles and "arrive" there in time. And provided that he is a clever social engineer and skilful in his dealings with his fellow men he will get there eventually. That sort of thing has, of course, been done many a time: young men have by persistent effort risen from nothing, so to speak, to positions of prominence in one or the other of the various walks of life, and become highly respected or famous or both.

The rich man's son may be equally ambitious, and probably regard some big position in the world as his by right of birth and training, and get it. But his path to success will be different from the one trodden

by the poor man's son, because of his pre-natal and post-natal history. With him social standing will count for a good deal and be helpful up to a point. Lobbying may do the rest.

In the first case there is a striving after knowledge which enables the aspirant to rise above the condition in which he is born, and in the other an adjustment of the individual to different conditions in much the same sphere to which he is accustomed.

With everyone of us there is the mighty tug of tradition and of family and social influence: we are all predisposed to follow a particular lead, and if it is in us to scheme, to try to curry favour and to do our damndest to get there somehow, no matter who else falls by the wayside as the result of our pushfulness, we shall probably do it. If, on the other hand, it has been our good fortune to have our course set in the opposite direction we are most likely to travel that way and lead a clean and wholesome life.

It is very largely a matter of inborn taste and sustenance. If we have an insatiable appetite for self and public approval, and we care for nothing but these, we can obtain them without very much difficulty; but if we have not an accommodating conscience, and if, moreover, we treasure our self-esteem and refuse to be bought, no matter what the temptation may be, we are not likely to be overburdened with worldly wealth.

Some there are who are prepared to sell their brains or their bodies, or both their brains *and* their bodies, to the highest bidder; but there are others that all the money in the world will not buy, simply because the price they are prepared to pay for the retention of their self-respect is immeasurable.

GEO. B. LISSENDEN

Christian Epitaphs on Certain Freethinkers

1.—H. G. WELLS

HERE lies buried H. G. Wells
Who knows where his spirit dwells?
If in Heaven, he'll start a movement
For its very great improvement.
If in Hell, he'll still be Wellish
Wanting Hell to be more hellish.

2.—G. B. SHAW

Here in peace lies Bernard Shaw,
Fabian but not a bore;
Preface-writer and a dramatist,
He hit Folly with a hammer-fist.
In his day he made much cash
By his pen and cut a dash;
Now that youngsters will not read him
"Speed the plough," and never heed him!
Bernard, living, would agree
With this statement readily:
"If an author isn't read
Then that author's worse than dead."

3.—ALDOUS HUXLEY

Here lies Aldous Huxley, writer.
Satan wanted this fire-lighter,
But benignly Peter looks
On his so-called naughty books:
Saying quietly: "He has wit;
He is not a hypocrite.
Really Satan, I can't spare
Anglo-Saxondom's Voltaire."

C. G. L. DU CANN

Correspondence

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF WILDE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Mr. Du Cann's brilliant disquisition on "The Significance of Oscar Wilde," which makes up his very kind and sympathetic review in your columns of my book, *Oscar Wilde, A Summing Up*, contains one sentence in which (quite unconsciously) he does injustice to Mr. Bernard Shaw. At the time when I was writing my book, last August, I wrote to Mr. Shaw and quoted what I had written about my father in relation to his free-thinking. Mr. Du Cann quotes a sentence from my book as follows: "What right has a Freethinker to confine his freethinking only to the sphere of his own prejudices and predilections?" Mr. Shaw in replying to my letter used the following words:—

Splendid idea that about free-thinking! go it for all you are worth.

There is therefore no disagreement on this point between Mr. Du Cann, Mr. Bernard Shaw and myself, and when I made the point in my book I was not "rebuking" (Mr. Du Cann's word) Mr. Bernard Shaw. I was merely confidently inviting his acquiescence in my argument.

ALFRED DOUGLAS

ROBERT LYND AND THE B.B.C.

SIR,—I think it only fair to say that I have now been informed by the Editor of *John O'London's Weekly*, that he never received my letter which you have published. Probably some of your readers also read that interesting literary periodical, and I must say as a rule it is quite fair to Freethinkers. I naturally assumed that my letter was included in those which the editor intimated he was not publishing. I regret that the only one published was the one referred to by Mr. Dale, but this was critical of Lynd.

I was delighted to hear that Mr. Edwin Chappell, the Pepys authority, was an Atheist. I had had pleasurable correspondence with him, but had no idea of his views on any matters other than the famous diarist. He would have appreciated my remarks recently at the South London Branch of the N.S.S., when I took as text a clause in a prayer at St. Olave's Church, Hart Street, at a commemoration service which referred to "Thy servant Samuel Pepys."

I may add that I have drawn Mr. Robert Lynd's attention to the correspondence in the *Freethinker*, but without avail. He probably knows how ill-equipped he is for a fray of this sort, and thinks discretion the better sort of valour.

W. KENT

WAR BEFORE WORSHIP

SIR,—This very fine Sunday morning of February in the Year of Our Lord One thousand Nine hundred and Forty, the Heavenly Father has had to take a very back seat, whilst mere Man took possession of the Firmament and fairly leapt around the Skies.

The causes of this were not entirely Man's fault; it was that Dictator, Director, Controller, or whoever it is that runs the weather. For the past weeks this has been so bad that poor little Man had been unable to go about his "awful" occupations—in this particular case "flying."

When this particular "Lord's Day" turned out to be beautifully fine the Skipper cancelled all Church Parades, Services and "what nots," deciding it was much more vital to make up for lost time and get in all the flying practice possible.

The gloom on the face of our Padre could only be equalled by what it must have been on the Heavenly Faces. One really felt quite sorry for them, and had a single voice been of any value, one might have been tempted to offer up a little prayer by way of consolation. This, however, would hardly make up for the loss of Mass

Prayer, Music, and Hymns of Praise and Adoration, which the "Old Man" is accustomed to on his own particular day, besides this single wee voice had been ordered to attend to other, more pressing duties (the enemy having also decided to do the same); nor is it likely that this solitary petition would have been heard above the noise of a dozen or so aeroplane engines.

After all, it is so much more important—anyhow the authorities here so decided—to get on with this vast preparation for each others' destruction.

A MERE MAN

"Somewhere in England."

THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE U.S.S.R.

SIR,—Mr. Kerr does me the honour to quote my *Philosophers on Holiday*. That book was based on a visit to Russia in 1932, and correctly records my impressions in that year. I fail to see that what I then said contradicts anything reported at the time by Shaw, Huxley or Haldane. My book was an attempt to set down objectively the good and bad in what I saw of Russia. Mr. Kerr selects two items from the debit side and ignores the credit. Anyone can do that.

I wish I were in touch with the British worker in Russia whom I described in my book. He would deal so much more faithfully with Mr. Kerr than I can! It is unfortunate for Mr. Kerr's own case that he should refer to him; for this man and others like him are living refutations of Mr. Kerr's thesis, that the only admirers of the U.S.S.R. are globe-trotters who do not know Russian.

Mr. Kerr concludes from his researches in Trotsky that "in 1937 the mass of the Russian people were still on a diet of rye bread and potatoes." All I can say is that if so, they thrive on it. I revisited Russia in that year and again in 1938, and can say that the difference between 1933 and the later years hit you in the face. That may have been a private optical illusion. But an agricultural expert attached to the American Embassy in Moscow, who had known Russia under the Tsar and since the Revolution, and who had no political axe to grind, told me emphatically that every year that passed saw an improvement in Russian agriculture. He was on the spot, and he knew.

Mr. Kerr's comparison with Lourdes is grotesque. No one pretends that anything supernatural has been achieved in Russia. And I will tell Mr. Kerr a secret: if he really wants to know why I put my money on Soviet Russia, it is because she has based her entire economic, political and cultural life on scientific materialism. In this sign she will conquer. When we in the West have even begun to do the same, we can talk. I happen to be one of those who take Secularism seriously, and want to see a Secularist world; not just to win debates.

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

SIR,—In your issue of March 3, Mr. C. A. Morrison says:—

"In my opinion, Mr. R. B. Kerr uses out-of-date Russian figures. Looking at last year's, we see that the average grain harvest for the five-year period prior to the 1914 war, amounted to not much more than 4,000 million poods; in 1937, 7,300 million poods were harvested."

I gave no figures for 1937 because the Statistical Year-book of the League of Nations, the greatest of all authorities, has no Russian figures for oats, barley, rye, or maize, later than 1935. In that year the total amount of all grains came to 81 million metric tons, which was identical with the crop of 1913, according to page 35 of Grinko's official book on the Five Year Plan. Meanwhile the population had increased by about 30 millions.

I am aware that in 1937 there was a phenomenal wheat crop of 44 million metric tons, while in the previous year it was only 30 millions. This increase, however, was not due to an extraordinary outburst of Soviet genius, but merely to the fact that the rainfall was abundant in 1937, while usually it is scanty. The same thing happens in capitalist countries of low rainfall. In Canada the wheat crop last year amounted to 479 million bushels, whilst in the five previous years it averaged only 260 millions.

R. B. KERR

PRAYER AND GOD

SIR,—Prayer therefore is and has by experience proved to be, useless. A Christian is a curious person who believes in the Efficacy of Prayer (when the prayer appears to be answered by his hypothetical God) and says "He knows best," when it is not. Such babyish thought and sheer lack of ability to understand what constitutes proof and what does not, is only one small example of the pernicious effect of religion in general, and the Christian brand in particular, on the minds of people who have been stuffed up with the "Great Truths" of Christianity from the age of about three upwards, and have never been able to think straight afterwards, in consequence.

Quite recently I had a discussion through *The Cambridge Review*, and in private, with Dr. Matthews, the Dean of St. Paul's, and the only evidence he could produce for the existence of God was that his reason told him that there was a God—in other words, if you want to believe in God, you just believe in him and through your belief in him he comes to exist. Subjectively, I should imagine; not objectively. I challenged Dean Matthews to give reasons in *The Cambridge Review*, for his belief in God, but Cambridge is in the Dark Ages, so far as discussion of religion is concerned, and the Editors refused to print my challenge.

Therefore, if Mr. Maurice B. Reckitt objects to what I have here said about prayer, I shall be only too pleased to read with great attention any evidence he may adduce for the existence of God, but I do not suppose for one brief second that he will accept the challenge. If he really believes this sort of stuff, then he should be ready to defend it.

DONALD DALE

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MARCH 10, 1940

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Preece, Seibert, Ebury, Silvester, Horowitz, Griffiths, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented.

On behalf of the Executive the President expressed condolence with Mr. W. Griffiths—a member of the Executive—and family on the death of Mr. T. Griffiths, senior.

New members were admitted to North London, Kingston, Portsmouth, Rossendale and the Parent Society.

Permission was given for the formation of a Branch of the Society at Portsmouth, and at Rossendale.

The receipt of a legacy of £100, with deductions under the will of the late David Clarke of Bury was reported, and matters in connexion with two other wills in which the N.S.S. is interested were discussed.

The sales account of the publication of the report of the International Freethought Congress in London was submitted and accepted.

Details of future propaganda were discussed and decisions reached.

The receipt of motions for the Agenda of the Annual Conference was reported. Messrs. Clifton and Seibert were elected to serve with the President and Secretary as an Agenda Committee. Other matters in connexion with the Annual Conference were discussed, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary

As man domesticates the animals, or chooses those which suit his purpose, and abolishes the rest, so does reason govern the moods of the brain, feeds upon its tranquil emotions and compresses those that are fierce, governs its imaginations, and in a word civilizes the savage countries of the original head.—Garth Wilkinson.

Obituary

LOUISE CATHERINE SCHERER

THE remains of Louise Catherine Scherer, aged 82, were cremated at the Islington Crematorium on Saturday, March 9. A Freethinker of many years standing, she served the cause in one of the most useful methods, by the example of her life and living. A stern fighter for human rights and freedom, she never hid her Freethought beliefs nor compromised her principles. Before an assembly of intimate members of the family a Secular Service was read by the General Secretary of the N.S.S.

R.H.R.

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

KINGSTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 6.30, A Lecture.
NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Cricketers' Arms, Inverness Street, near Camden Town Underground Station): 7.30, Mr. T. H. Elstob—"Truth on its War-time Ration."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Conway Memorial Lecture. Rt. Hon. Lord Snell, P.C., C.B.E.—"Britain, America and World Leadership." Chair will be taken by Mr. Thurtle, M.P.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Lamb and Flag, James Street, Oxford Street, opposite Bond Street Station): 7.0, Debate: "Should We be Socialists?" Affir.: Mr. Green (Militant Socialist International). Neg.: Mr. H. Cutner.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Stevenson Square): 3.0, Mr. W. A. Atkinson will lecture. The *Freethinker* and literature on sale.

INDOOR

BERKENHEAD (WIRRAL) BRANCH, N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, Mr. Thorpe. A Lantern Lecture on "The Arabs and Jews in Palestine."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 3.0, Mr. J. M. Cameron—A Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (The Picture House, Market Street, Manchester): 3.0, Chapman Cohen—"Dictators and Democracy."

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