

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •
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Views and Opinions

Ourself and Others

ONE of our lady readers writes us that she has been doing what she can to help by passing her copy of the *Freethinker* on to others. We thank her for her efforts, and, in the main, it is the way in which the *Freethinker* has been able to continue for nearly sixty years, never possessing the funds necessary to indulge in commercial advertising, save by occasional nibbles at the task, and always losing money with a regularity that would have settled most papers years ago. There is scarcely a week passes without our receiving letters telling us of the good done by this personal post action, and many are the letters received from readers to thank us heartily for having such a journal as this one placed in their way. There is, of course, another kind of letter, usually from men, expressing indignation at having such a paper sent them, and asking us to discontinue the sending. We can do little to help these poor people from the shock they must receive when something is forced upon them, which, to use a colloquialism, "makes them think." We have a great deal of sympathy with them, as we ought to have with our weaker brethren and sisters. But we think that the fact of running up against ideas with which they are unfamiliar, is quite a beneficial experience. The man who knows only one idea on any subject, does not know even the subject which that idea touches. He is no more than a kind of walking gramophone, save that he generally develops a cowardice of which a gramophone is incapable.

The lady to whom we referred sends us a sheet of a letter received, evidently from a friend to whom she had given the *Freethinker*. Here it is:

About the *Freethinker*.—To be quite candid, I do not contact anybody who cares two hoots one way or the other. They are simply bored about a subject they have never thought about and never want to think about. The only people I know who are at all inclined that way are the bunch of Roman Catholics next door. They are a sturdy growth and I doubt if they would appreciate the ethical nature

of the subjects dealt with in the paper. I might poke it through the knocker some morning before they go to mass. If they caught me they would surely think I was an emissary of the devil. If they picked it up they would drop it like a hot cinder and cross themselves in the manner peculiar to the tribe. After picking it up with the tongs and dropping it on the fire they would hasten to the Holy Father and confess their transgressions before it was too late to receive absolution or extreme unction or whatever it is they give 'em for this complaint.

Now this is not an uncommon kind of a comment made by those who are not very much concerned themselves with the play of ideas in life, and who are therefore not to be attracted by those who are. If I am wrong in my assumption in this particular case, I apologise in advance; but that leaves me almost without an explanation of the situation.

* * *

Do People Care?

I take first of all the remark that Mr. X does not "contact anybody who cares two hoots" about religion "one way or the other." I am left wondering what kind of a community Mr. X lives in. Mind, I do not mean by this that Mr. X is not speaking truthfully—so far as he sees the situation. But right next door to him there is a family of Roman Catholics, who, if he gave them a copy of this paper would pick it up with a pair of tongs, put it in the fire and confess to a priest their lapse from religious purity. I think that is probably what might occur in such a case—but here, at least, are some acquaintances very much interested in the subject of religion, so interested that they believe they have committed a "mortal sin" even in touching the *Freethinker*. They may be unlikely converts, but they obviously care more than "two hoots" about religion. And we would suggest to Mr. X that if he takes the trouble to express views that seriously affect *all* religious beliefs, he will soon find that religion is cared for by a huge number of people. He may get along quite comfortably expressing views on politics with which many disagree, he may also avoid offending many if he does not openly and plainly state that he is without belief in any religion, and proceeds along the safe road of saving his self-respect (after a fashion) by saying that his *religion* differs from that of other people, and hopes to hide his disbelief in all gods by saying that he cannot make up his mind as to whether there is a God or not; or he may avoid trouble by professing belief in the ethical greatness of a Jesus Christ who is just as mythical as the crucified and resurrected god. You can easily conclude that no one cares about religion if you play your part in the game of carefully avoiding saying anything about it.

But make it part of your policy to let your own non-religious beliefs, or anti-religious beliefs be known to

your friends and acquaintances, and no matter how easily and civilly this is done you will find that people do care about religion enough to break a friendship, boycott a business, or ostracize a straightforward unbeliever. Mr. X should consider why it happens that so great a proportion of our politicians are afraid to confess their disbelief in religion? What would happen in this country if our Lord Chancellor was an avowed Atheist instead of holding to the most primitive and most superstitious forms of religious belief? The probability is he would never become Lord Chancellor, because the Prime Minister, however much of an unbeliever he might be, would be afraid to appoint him. Why is it that so many newsagents in small towns, and sometimes in big ones, find it does not pay them to display the *Freethinker*? It is because they find there are a great many people who care about religion to the extent of ruining a man's business if he does so. Newspapers do not decline letters from Freethinkers or boycott an anti-religious article because the editors and sub-editors are all very religious men. It would be an insult to their intelligence to suppose they are more religious as a whole than any other group. It is because they know that a continuous attack on religion means decreased circulation, and possibly the "sack."

* * *

Hide and Seek

Some years ago we were lecturing in Belfast. At the conclusion of the meeting one of the audience came up and introduced himself as a subscriber. He came from a village a short distance from Belfast. While he was speaking another man joined us with a "Hallo, I didn't know you were a Freethinker!" The other man replied, "Neither did I know you were." Both these men had lived in the same place for years, were known to each other, but each had hesitated to let his opinions be known. Like Mr. X they each might have said, "We make no contacts with anyone who cares about religion." In the crowds that pass us daily there are multitudes who have habits of which their neighbours are ignorant, but it would be very foolish indeed for anyone to assume that these habits had no existence.

Mr. X does not think it would be of much use giving the *Freethinker* to his Roman Catholic neighbours because they would put it in the fire. Probably he is correct in his judgment. But there may be others of his neighbours who are not given to that form of absurdity. There are Protestants with all their variegated forms of nonsense; and there are many who don't know where they are. Has Mr. X made any experiments with these? I do not know where Mr. X lives, but I should like to know the name of the town (I will keep the secret) where the inhabitants are so intellectually hopeless and so reason proof as Mr. X's neighbours and acquaintances. Or is the opinion really due to a lack of investigation? Does Mr. X go through life avoiding conversation on religion, keeping his opinions to himself for fear of offending others, while many of these "others" are practising the same policy towards him. The truth is, we think, that at the bottom of this "people-are-not-interested-in-religion, -and-therefore-we-do-not-speak-about-it" attitude is the fear of the consequences that an open avowal of complete disbelief may bring. There are still too many of the Chesterfield belief that the religion of a sensible man is one that a sensible man never avows. That may be a counsel of safety to the timid, but it is not one that reflects great credit upon those who practise it nor does it give help to the creation of an intellectually cleaner atmosphere.

The "Freethinker"

But underlying the statement we have been criticizing there are two further misconceptions, and, in some instances they are interested and deliberate ones. One concerns Freethought, the other the *Freethinker*. The first asserts, sometimes openly, sometimes by implication, that Freethought is concerned only with an attack on religion, established and unestablished. That is simply not true. It is true that opposition to freedom of thought and expression is historically associated with religion, and I believe has its roots in religion. This I believe to be one of the neglected truths of modern anthropology which will be made clear so soon as anthropologists are prepared to carry to their logical end the consequences of their generalizations. But in the history of civilization it is sun-clear that it is from the religious side of life the denial of the right to free speech has come. The basis of the demand for freedom of thought and speech—one is almost useless without the other—is not religious, it is sociological. It is based upon the scientifically demonstrated truth that social progress is dependent upon the free play of ideas, and that is something which no religion can admit. What kind of society will be developed if all the people were of the same kind as Mr. X's Roman Catholic neighbours? And how are they to be developed into useful citizens if we are all to take up the position of Mr. X? As it is we have to work to convert his neighbours, and to maintain a freedom that he has, apparently done little to create or to guard.

Finally, the *Freethinker*. It is one of those carefully and widely circulated lies by the religious world, and also by those who live in fear of being taken for complete Atheists, that the *Freethinker*, is "coarse," "vulgar," and thinks of nothing but a cheap attack on religion. This is, not merely untrue in the sense of it not being a statement of fact, it is in many cases a deliberate lie. The *Freethinker* is a small journal—16 pages all told. And yet, what other journal in this country touches a greater variety of subjects? What other journal is written with less fear of enemies, or, what is even more demoralizing, with a less fear of offending friends? Let anyone take up an annual volume of the *Freethinker*, note its contents, and then let him say how many other journals—if any—can he name in this country where the subjects are more varied in their nature, touch life at so many points, or deal with subjects with so much freedom. Of course it is largely taken up with religion, but it is with religion as it touches life at all its points, and we think it is this that causes timidity to shield its fear and bigotry its malevolence by misrepresentation. There have been many freethinking journals before and contemporary with this one; is there one that has ever stated the Freethought case with more accuracy, less fear and greater ability, or which has contained a larger measure of fundamental brain power? And a journal such as this one is selective in its friends and in its enemies. It does not attract the timid or the time-serving, although we believe it has saved many from becoming such. We may fairly say that it is the one journal in this country which consistently and persistently relates all forms of religion to social phenomena, and seeks by the removal of superstition—open or disguised—to raise life to a higher level. We do not marvel at the number of our enemies, but we are cheered and encouraged by the number and the quality of our friends.

CHAPMAN COHEN

One hour in the execution of justice is worth seventy years of prayer.—Mohammedan Proverb.

The American Balzac

Religion is but a monument of ancient fear.
—Edgar Saltus.

The things we boast of will one day be quoted to prove our ignorance.—Emerson.

EDGAR SALTUS (1858-1921) was an author with a reputation on both sides of the Atlantic ocean. He was an American only in the sense that Edgar Allen Poe was one. There was nothing provincial about Saltus, and in thousands of readable pages he revealed his cosmopolitan culture and sympathies. With Thomas Paine he could have said, proudly, "the world is my country." An artist to the finger-tips, Saltus called for recognition as much as D'Annunzio, Maxim Gorky, Anatole France, and others, for whom so many British altars flamed in worship.

Characteristically, Edgar Saltus began his literary career with a book on Balzac. It was brief, bright, and imbued with the spirit of the matter. A year later he showed another facet of his bright genius by writing *The Philosophy of Disenchantment*, a remarkable exposition of the teaching of Schopenhauer, Hartmann, Leopardi, and other thinkers. This work was followed by the brilliant and illuminating *The Anatomy of Negation*, a book which alone would have made the reputation of a lesser man. Unlike so many philosophic works, the book was a real and unmistakable success. In a note to a later edition Saltus said:—

In brief, it was the writer's endeavour to divest his readers of one or two idle preoccupations, and to leave him serene.

The book was a tableau of Atheism from Kapila to Leconte de Lisle, and helped to fill a much-needed blank in literature. All Saltus's books are thought-compelling. As an essayist he stood in the very front rank, his *Pomps of Salan* being a work of absorbing and unflagging interest. Instead of fantasy and the world of dreams, the author gave us society and the world of reality. Instead of pathos and bathos, we had cynical, cultured criticism, and the style was the veriest glory of epigram. The subjects were curious and varied, such as *The Gilded Gang*, *Vanity Square*, *The Golden Fold*, *The Toilet of Venus*, and described the fashions, foibles, and failings of modern American society. There was acid, too, in the criticism. His sarcastic description, "The Benighted States," as he called the Great Republic of the West, was not a compliment, but the jest went round the world. New York he drenched in vitriol:—

Never, perhaps, except in the Rome of the Cæsars, has there been gathered together in one city a set so rich, so idle, so profoundly uninterested in anything save themselves.

This was the manner in which Edgar Saltus hurled out his gibes and his epigrams. All that easy zest, that curling of his tongue round the subject, that freedom from enthusiasm, were possible only to a man who simplified his life by dividing it well, and not by cultivating one side at the expense of another.

As a novelist Saltus justified his great reputation. His stories form a collection which merit his claim to be the American Balzac. In his work, *Mary Magdalene* he produced a most daring and successful reconquest of antiquity that has been attempted by a writer in English. In it he reconstructed a Bible legend, just as Gustave Flaubert presented a story of ancient Carthage in his *Salamambo*. All Saltus's novels were provocative. *Mr. Incul's Misadventure*, *The Truth about Tristram Verek*, *Eden*, *A Transaction in Hearts*, *Madam Sapphira*, to name but a few, form a very

notable collection, which challenged the idols of the circulating libraries and beat them with genius and pure artistry.

Edgar Saltus was richly endowed with the blood-royal of literature. In one of his novels, a principal character is made to say:—

I would rather have written *Salamambo* than have built the Brooklyn Bridge. It was more difficult, and it will last longer.

This characteristic remark presents his fine literary ambition in a sentence. A poet at heart, Saltus proved his claim in many a passage of really beautiful prose. Listen to this daring and eloquent passage, worthy of De Quincey at his best and bravest:—

The Orient is asleep in the ashes of her gods. The star of Ormuzd has burned out in the skies. On the banks of her sacred seas, Greece, hushed for evermore, rests on the divine limbs of her white immortals. In the sepulchre of the pale Nazarene, humanity guards its last divinity. Every promise is unfulfilled. There is no light save, perchance, in death. One torture more, one more throb of the heart, and after it, nothing. The grave opens, a little flesh falls in, and the weeds of forgetfulness, which soon hide the tomb, grow eternally above its vanities. And still the voice of the living, of the just and the unjust, of Kings, of felons, and of beasts, will be raised unsilenced, until humanity unsatisfied as before, and yet impatient, for the peace which life has disturbed, is tossed at last, with its shattered globe and forgotten gods, to fertilise the furrows of space where worlds ferment.

In *The Lords of the Ghostland*, Saltus deals with Brahma, Ormuzd, Amon Ra, Bel-Marduk, Jehovah, Zeus and Jupiter. It is on such vignettes that show Saltus's art at its best. Death, for example, has been a subject that has attracted thousands of writers, yet he can invest such a threadbare subject with freshness:—

There are topics about which words hover like enchanted bees. Death is one of them. Mediævally it was represented by a skeleton to which prose had given a rictus, poetry or scythe, and philosophy wings. From its eyries it swooped spectral and sinister. Previously it was more gracious. In Greece it resembled Eros. Among its attributes was beauty. It did not alarm. It beckoned and consoled. The child of Night, the brother of Sleep, it was less funereal than narcotic. In the change of things death lost its charm. It became a sexless nightmare frame of bones topped by a grinning skull. In epicurean Rome it was a marionette that invited you to wreathe yourself with roses before they could fade. In the Muslim East it was an angel, in Vedic India it was a god. Changing again, it has now acquired the serenity of a natural law.

Saltus carried a weight of scholarship gracefully. His criticism of the older deities show his wide range of knowledge when irony and humanity, tempering one another, lend to his works an inimitable charm. No one but a real artist in words could have written his books.

A many-sided man of genius, Edgar Saltus enjoyed life, and relished its eternal panorama. He was universal in his appeal. He loved the old-world garden where Horace smiled at Rome; the supper-table where smiling Voltaire challenged the best wits of Europe; the chateau of brave, old Montaigne, and the beautiful river-haunts of Whitman. Saltus showed us, if, indeed, it were needed, that the American can compete successfully with the culture of the admired European writers. He was a philosopher, a poet, a critic, a novelist, and that rare thing in our popular world of laborious penmen, a really fine writer of English, the finest and most-widespread language in the world.

The German Contribution to Psychology

[GESTALT]

THE war is young, but already on more than one occasion the music of Wagner, the German, has had a "mixed reception." This tendency is fortunately not widespread, but it shows what is possible under a war psychology.

What should we think of the mentality of an enemy who suddenly changed his opinion about the Shakespearean plays because they were composed by an Englishman? He might just as well throw himself from his own roof, trusting that the law of gravitation was false, since it was discovered by Newton.

German culture in various fields represents no small contribution to humanity's assets, and I here wish to make a brief presentation of some of the main elements of the famous Gestaltpsychologie, which had its beginnings at Frankfurt am Main in 1912. To-day Gestaltists are widely scattered over the civilized world, and have to their credit a truly enormous amount of controlled experiment. It is no longer a local affair, and may be said to enjoy a vogue equal to that of Psycho-analysis and Behaviorism.

Though 1912 was the year in which Wertheimer's work gave a definite scheme to Gestalt, it did not suddenly spring into being in that year. Like psycho-analysis it was the product of a growth. Freud's adoption of "free association," following his study of hysteria with Breuer, was a substitute for the hypnosis effect he had himself studied under Charcot and Bernheim, and if we care to go back further we can connect the study of hypnotism with that of mesmerism at the turn of the nineteenth century. Similarly Gestalt doctrine may be traced to the philosophy of Meinong and of von Ehrenfels with his *gestaltqualität* (form-quality), and less directly to the "phenomenology" of Husserl.

Ehrenfels made the apparently harmless observation that a musical melody remains the same melody when it is transposed into another key. Every single note is altered, but the melody remains.

Let the reader suppose that to-day he has heard a popular "song-hit" for the first time. It was in Key C. To-morrow, if he has been impressed (not necessarily pleased) he will remember it in any key. Thus, he need not trouble to run over it note by note in association fashion. He will remember it as a form (or *Gestalt*). There is no laborious recollection of notes; he jumps straight to their relationships and stresses.

The reader may here object that he sometimes remembers only a few notes or snatches. The Gestaltist would say this is inaccurate. What has happened has been a "falling out of Gestalt." He remembers, perhaps, a *bar*, which is really a little gestalt on its own. He will get no further by the "trial and error" method of humming isolated notes that are not related to each other in a *gestalt* way, but suddenly the correct stimulus comes and the whole melody, which has been "haunting" him all the time, returns in a flash.

Now our friend Ehrenfels was no materialist. He knew the form-quality was more than the individual units and so he posited an "intellectual faculty" over and above the senses in order to do the work of combining the sense-impressions into a gestalt. First, he said, we sense bits. Next, he added, we relate them by our faculty so as to apprehend the "wholes."

So far the theory is on a level with some vague "vital force," or in this case "transcendent ego," a quite obscurantist conception. Then came the Gestalt psychologists, following up the experiments of Wert-

heimer. The chief names in the story are Wolfgang Köhler, Kurt Koffka (now practising in America), and in a lesser degree, Sander, while Gestalt has also interested medical psychologists (e.g. Fuchs).

In place of some supposed Mind-Power doing the work of correlation, gestalt psychology now deals with elementary sensations, not as material for association within the conscious subject, not as separated bits awaiting organized assembly, but as parts of an immediately and *directly experienced* whole.

What is the mechanism? Gestalt psychology rests on a physiological basis; it first posited complicated processes in the nervous system, nowhere calling to its aid a soul. Fields of force, set up by the sensory nervous currents, related the sensations together into a synthetic whole. Köhler and Koffka each theorized as to the way this was accomplished; their explanations were in physiological terms.

As a later development, however, this act of union in the nervous system was abandoned. It was observed that the work of union is *done at the source*. It is the direct object of perception itself. What we immediately perceive are unitary wholes. This perception corresponds to the total brain state at the moment, and this isomorphism, or agreement, makes any higher faculty of correlation, like v. Ehrenfels', a redundant hypothesis.

Experiments both with humans and with animals confirm this. It is most difficult to give illustrations of the Gestalt "principle of closure" in a written article. My weapon is talk; my need is chalk. One has to use words where one ought to use objects.

Under the present conditions, then, the best sample I can think of whereby the reader might test Gestalt for himself is the following. Make two marks widely separated on paper. Cover them up, and along the same locus make a similar pair, the third mark being closer to the second than to the fourth. He can then continue the process *ad nauseam*, taking care to cover each pair before beginning the next. The result will be something like the following:—X - - - - - X - X - - - - - X - X - - - - - X - X.

The configuration (or *gestalt*) which has throughout met his gaze has been X - - - - - X. Upon suddenly removing the whole cover he is appealed to, unless Gestalt is wrong, not by X - - - - - X, but by X - X. I am relying on the reader to go by his *immediate perception*, which is all the gestaltist is at this stage concerned with, and not to employ any extra powers of discernment.

The example I have used is, of course, rendered obsolete by having been seen in its entirety. Therefore the interested reader could make his own experiments. I suggest he changes the letter and runs the line in another direction. The point is, that the *gestalt* is already *decided for us* by something in the external world, and the form-quality already known is rebuked. The extensions are endless. An experiment with circles, for instance, would start with one of small radius drawn inside one of a greater radius from the same centre. Again from the same centre, the third would have a radius exceeding that of the second by less than the excess of the second over the first.

On the same principle of closure gestaltists have found that birds and chimpanzees, for example, respond to *figures* rather than to sensations. Their data of behaviour cannot profitably be treated in their elemental impressions or constituents, but as a cooperating and interacting assembly. Structural totalities are the units of mental behaviour. We see, not a succession of pictures, but the moving cinematograph. Shapes, again, which are easily recalled to mind after being seen alone, are more difficult to recall when they have been presented in a group, in which

case they have taken their place in the gestalt whole. (This might be tried out on the wallpaper.) Similarly the recollection of a shape or object belonging to a group will be vastly different when isolated from its larger gestalt by being viewed through a hole in a nearer object, or through the cupped hand.

With a successful record of experimental research behind them, gestaltists hold that the animal thinks in *gestalt* manner. In a simple case, food is presented to the ape in a box covered with medium grey cloth, but there is no food in the one covered with light grey. This is done often enough to establish an association in the behaviorist way. Next, the ape has to choose between medium and dark grey. Bear in mind that the ape has learned to get food with the medium grey. He now chooses dark grey.

What has happened? He has *perceived by way of comparison*. He formerly associated food with the medium grey *as against a lighter shade*. The comparison is elemental; he subsequently goes for the darker shade, eschewing the actual shade with which food was received. Thus, he shows he has no fixed association of food with the element medium grey. Rather does he grasp a comparison of shade and behaves in accordance with that perceived comparison. In other words he thinks in *gestalt*; he takes into account the environment of the whole form-quality, and this as a result of direct perception and not of an unrelated "ego."

At a higher level of behaviour the ape is able, after waiting for the correct stimulus, *suddenly* to sum up a situation, the solution presenting itself as a *gestalt* and not by the trial-and-error route. A banana is placed outside the cage too far away to reach. A stick, also in view, is within reach. We might call this a stick-banana-hunger *gestalt*, and when it is realized the animal at once draws in the fruit. In this case the principle of closure operates very quickly. The elements of the situation are seen determinately in relation to each other. It is more delayed when the stick to be used is the branch of a tree, for in that case the tree forms a firmly established closed whole for the ape, and it is some time before he *sees* the branch as a stick in relation to the banana.

This principle of closure is extended by Gestalt to account for the higher thought processes and voluntary actions. It remains to seek the physiological mechanism.

G. H. TAYLOR

(To be concluded)

The Narrow Mind

A FAMILIAR term of reproach is to say of a person that he or she is "narrow-minded" just as a favourite if less emphatic word of commendation is its opposite "broad-minded." But these adjectives are generally applied to people in a vague, slapdash, impatient manner; and few of those who so readily employ them, really give them a specific meaning. It would make for clarity of thought if we attached a more definite meaning to the term "narrow-minded."

What exactly is a narrow mind? A preferable way to put it would be a narrowed mind. But narrowed by what? All minds must be narrowed to some extent by their inherent limitations, and this is true of even the greatest human minds. But such mental failings as prejudice or inertia amongst many others cramp every mind still more and it is of such fetters as these we think when we speak of a person as "narrow-minded."

The fact that this epithet is popularly applied to

many religious folk is not without significance. To some extent religion must necessarily narrow the mind. For faith, and especially the Christian Faith, will not permit its followers to think for themselves. They must "believe," not question nor doubt certain things. To question is sin. But to free men no intellectual process can be sin—unless it be the deliberate inhibition of an intellectual process at the artificial behest of an outside and imposed compulsion. The Catholic who *must* believe in his Pope and Church; the Protestant who *must* believe in his Bible, have narrowed their mental outlooks on these subjects and of course on others more or less related to them. Deliberately to refuse to think on a whole series of fundamentals—for that is what the unquestioning acceptance of Authority comes to—must cramp or close any mind, however strong and great that mind may be by nature.

But, of course, religious narrow-mindedness is only one of many forms of mental self-stultification. Prejudice of all kinds, national, political, conventional, social, personal, and so on, equally fence in the mind and stifle clear thinking. In war-time, for instance, from that national prejudice we call patriotism, we deliberately are encouraged to narrow our minds so far as "the enemy" is concerned. And how completely most of us do it! But in so far as we give way to our prejudices of whatever kind, whatever form any prejudice takes, we narrow the mind.

And unfortunately for human progress, the once-narrowed mind, all unconscious of its narrowness, is apt to remain narrow. Cribbed and confined within its inhibitions, how shall such a mind arrive at Truth? How shall it "see life steadily and see it whole"? Of course it cannot. For such reasons all mental-fetters and mental-blinkers of whatever kind or nature are evil things, and, for my part, I am not disposed to say which are the most evil; religious or national or conventional (to name three) prejudices. The crimes of religion and patriotism, are indeed foul. Religion and patriotism have murdered untold myriads of humanity in the past and continue to murder them to-day. But conventionalism may murder the mind. Is it worse to murder a mind or a body? "As well kill a man as a good book," cried the sublime (and religious) John Milton indignantly. And after all most of us would prefer a physical to a mental breakdown.

We must face the fact, however, that the narrow mind has its strength as well as its weakness. It is the narrow mind that pertains to Fanaticism as also to intense Concentration. And fanatics and one-track mentalities often accomplish much because action is easy to such beings; also they are not distracted by complexity. Narrowness often breeds saints, heroes and successful men. The finest minds like Hamlet are defeated while the inferior like Laertes accomplish. Some dim understanding of this fact causes people of our day—especially young people—joyfully and deliberately to embrace mental strait-jackets such as Communism or Fascism in politics or Romanism or Oxford Groupism in religion. To follow any creed blindly is easy and comfortable to the slave-mentality because the follower has no more responsibility. Thus, many men join the armed forces as soldiers or join faiths as devotees or join political parties as adherents and leave a sigh of relief because "We hear and obey" is more comfortable than "We enquire for ourselves and worry and strain and strive and agonize—and perhaps go wrong in the end." Similarly, some criminals like prison-life for the same reason just as monks and nuns like their cells.

Few people have the courage to praise narrow-mindedness while it succeeds. None will confess to possessing it. But it is curious that people highly

praise "single-heartedness"—which is in the realm of emotion what narrow-mindedness is in the sphere of thought. Is the single heart entirely laudable? In love the Western world is united to swear that it is. "To love one woman only, cleave to her" in the Tennyson phrase is thought to be the only thinkable ideal. Yet Shelley would have none of it and said so in flaming, passionate words, as well as in conduct. Our marriage-convention is founded on this idea as on a rock; but the existence of divorce, bigamy, secret adultery and the like show that it does not suit all mankind. Undoubtedly, it is for most folk wrong and unnatural to concentrate all their emotion on one individual or one object in life. And the much-praised singleness of heart is as evil in many cases as the much-denounced narrowness of mind. Yet the single heart has its strength too—your Sir Galahad is not distracted and will reach his "Blessed Vision" doubtless. But at what a price? And is it any answer to say that Sir Galahad does not grudge the price? The answer to that, is that he ought to.

In the abstract such terms as a "narrow mind" and a "broad-mind" are, of course, as misleading, as a "bad man" or "a good man." No mind, even the narrowest, is likely to be narrow on all questions. Shakespeare, whose mind with much justification has been called "universal," took a narrow and snobbish view on some small matters, and Milton, whose mind had the spaciousness of the firmament itself in dealing with such subjects as the tragedy of his blindness or his vocation as a poet, was quite capable of the narrowest view upon the proper Status of Women or church-government. Still there can be little doubt that narrowing the mind in one direction is apt to narrow it generally.

In spite of lip-condemnation of "a narrow mind," most people are really terrified of mental freedom both in themselves and in others. Like a lifelong caged-bird suddenly released, the freedom of space is alien, forbidding and dangerous to them. It is much more comfortable not to think freely (or at all) for themselves, but to let the newspapers, the wireless, the conventions of the day, the herd-majority, the Government and the Church do their "thinking" for them.

But it is essential to the happiness of really intelligent minds and to the good of humanity at large that the mind should be limited by nothing but its own natural boundaries. That a man shall think for himself not merely on religious and political subjects, but also upon *all* subjects; that he should, to use a Biblical phrase "prove all things and hold fast to that which is good—" but not hold fast too tenaciously even to that, for "the good is the enemy of the better." Life is a flux, and there is no finality in human thought. The enslaved mind will hug its chains. But we who are neither creed-slaves, nor State-slaves nor convention-slaves, nor family-slaves, nor money-slaves, nor slaves of any kind—"we that have free souls," as Shakespeare said—how shall we endure any of the ordinary mental yokes? Alas! Of most men we may say that some are born slaves, some achieve slavery (and like it), and some have slavery thrust upon them. "Thought is free." But when you hear men express some thought what a miserable chained captive "thought" it often is—a puling infant in swaddling-clothes; an anæmic virgin in tight-laced corsets; a sick prisoner in gyves.

Yet at the best, the mind (a child of former minds, a creature of shreds and patches culled from life and books) is in servitude to itself. Those shackles can never be flung off while this earthly vesture of the body remains, and the mind itself ceases to be—the ultimate freedom, I suppose.

C. G. L. DU CANN

An Appreciation

THERE must have been many people who read Mr. George Wallace's paper on David Hume with pleasure and entertainment. We recall that Hume was a Free-thought pioneer, whose famous argument on the impossibility of miracles was disconcerting to the orthodox. "It is," said he, "contrary to all human experience that miracles should be true, both reason and facts tending to show the invariable nature of the laws which govern all physical phenomena, and, moreover, the improbability of a miracle ever having taken place is far greater than the improbability of the testimony to such an event being false, the witnesses being likely either to have been duped themselves or to dupe others."

When in 1868 Huxley was lecturing to an Edinburgh audience on "The Physical Basis of Life," he spoke of "the vigour of thought and the exquisite clearness of style of the man whom I make bold to term the most acute thinker of the eighteenth century—even though that century produced Kant." And let us remember that approbation from Huxley was praise indeed.

About fifty years ago I too stood on Calton Hill and looked over Auld Reekie repeopleing her streets and wynds with the exiguous shades of Burns, Scott, Jeanie Deans, the "Shepherd," Wilson, the brothers Chambers, Flora Macdonald, and other honest men and bonnie lassies. But there was no "Guide bodie" to indicate the resting graves of "Davie" and Greyfriars Bobby. These I found later. To many readers on this side of the Tweed Mr. Wallace's reference to Greyfriars Bobby will be obscure; it refers to one of whom it may be said: "Greater love hath no man than this." Here is the simple story. Bobby was a rough terrier whose master was a Midlothian farmer named Gray. Master and dog were always to be seen together in Edinburgh on market-days, and when the Castle gun announced the hour of one they were used to repair to a little restaurant near Greyfriars Churchyard for their midday meal. In 1858 Gray died and was laid to rest in the old churchyard. A few days after, as the echoes of the Castle gun died away, Bobby entered the room where he and his master had so often sat together. His hungry and woe-begone appearance touched the heart of Mr. Thraill, the proprietor, who gave him a bun, which Bobby immediately carried away. After this visit had been several times repeated, Mr. Thraill followed Bobby, and found that it was his custom to take his bun to the cemetery, and there, as if they were again united, to eat it by his master's grave.

Bobby rarely left the cemetery for long, and the story of his devotion becoming known, several kindly people helped to comfort him during his long and lonely vigil. Doubtless the Recording Angel has noted the name of Mr. Thraill, who welcomed and fed Bobby; of James Brown, the custodian of the cemetery, who built for him a shelter near his master's grave and, at least, laid him nearby; and of the Lord Provost, Robert Chambers, who provided his licence, and a collar inscribed with his name.

The memorial to Bobby, which stands close to the gate of Greyfriars Church, was the gift of one who loved animals—the Baroness Burdett-Coutts; it bears the following inscription:—

A Tribute
To the Affectionate Fidelity
of
GREYFRIARS BOBBY

In 1858 this faithful dog followed the remains of his master to Greyfriars Churchyard, and lingered near

the spot until his death in 1872. To some sympathetic American cousins we owe the memorial which marks the resting-place of Gray :—

JOHN GRAY
Died 1858
"Auld Jock"

Master of Greyfriars Bobby
And even in his ashes most beloved.

It is an ower true tale, which would have touched the heart of David Hume who, as Mr. Wallace reminds us, "loved all creatures great and small."

Mr. Wallace gives us a whiff of the keen snell air of the old grey city—bracing and inspiring alike to Scot and Southerner. Her sons and daughters the world over think of her as "hame," for the Scotch have a peculiar affection for the place of their birth, and their hearts still vibrate to the music of "Auld Lang Syne," "The Flowers of the Forest," and "Lochaber no More."

EDGAR SYERS

Aoid Drops

To those examples given of late of the concerted action of the clergy and a number of politicians, backed up by the *Times* to use the war as an occasion for getting a larger measure of dogmatic religious instruction brought into the State schools, we have to add the Bishop of Chelmsford (Dr. Wilson). He says :—

Religious instruction cannot be given by people who do not believe in it and who do not practise. . . . It is not a question which can be settled by providing a good syllabus. We have that already, but if the teacher does not believe the syllabus and is conspicuous by his absence from church on Sunday, the whole thing becomes a farce.

Now we do not disagree with this in the least. It is logical, and if we are to have religion in the schools we must be prepared for its consequences. Religion is not something that can be taught as ordinary school subjects are taught. It must be taught as an act of faith, and it must be accepted as such. But to the *educated* teacher religion cannot be taught as an ordinary subject. The free play of the pupil's mind cannot be tolerated in a class when and where religion is on the carpet. As Roman Catholics are always telling us there must be a religious "atmosphere." Religion must be taught as no other subject is taught. It is given *ex cathedra*, and must be accepted as an unquestionable dogma.

But we hope that the teachers—who really hold a key position in this matter, will realize what is before them. The aim is to see that dogmatic religion is taught in the schools; also that the teachers shall be themselves religious, and that they shall prove that religion by attendance at church. They may escape trouble by becoming complete hypocrites, but they cannot continue as independent individuals. It is time that teachers' organizations paid close attention to something more important to the nation, and even to themselves as a class, than wages and pensions. Intelligent self-respect must be with the teacher if he is to encourage it in the pupils.

In these days of Christian lying about the alleged ill-effects of an alleged "secular education," on no account should we miss the paragraph we quote below from the *Church Times*, in an article on "Unhappy Judas" :—

It is for us to judge no man, but one of the saddest things about the present troubles of the world is that Hitler, Stalin, Goebbels, and many of their confederates were all brought up as Christians and Catholics. Stalin, so it appears, at one time contemplated the priesthood; while, so I read, Hitler's name is included in the German Catholics' "Who's Who."

If all the people who are condemned by the *Church Times* had been brought up as Atheists they would have served as a terrible example of what happens when religious education is neglected. As they were given a religious training they prove the need of *more* religion. Heads I win, tails you lose.

The British and Foreign Bible Society boasts that it has sold (or distributed) 600,000 New Testaments amongst men in H.M. Forces—10,000 of them to the Australian men. There is a pretty touch of impartiality in its announcement that :—

The Society hears from its agent in Buenos Aires that he was able to send a grant of Scriptures to Port Stanley for the men of the *Exeter*, who played such a gallant part in the engagement with the *Graf Spee*. The agent also got into touch with the local Lutheran minister, offering him a grant of German New Testaments for the interned prisoners of the *Graf Spee*.

God—and the B. & F.B.S.—will expect a Vote of Thanks equally from the released British captives, and the interned German prisoners. As the poet says :—

God moves in a mysterious way
His blunders to perform.

The *Daily Mirror* has a "Lover's Log," in which it fully maintains the informative and literary value of the paper. Recently it told us that girls born on the 6th, 15th and 24th of the month will want (on that day) to be taken out to some place of amusement. It does not need the stars in or out of their courses to tell us that. There are other days in the month to which it will just as accurately apply.

The leader of "World Service Group," a movement founded by him to "bring Spiritualism to the nobility," however, attaches significance to the *Daily Mirror's* helpful tips. When he was wed recently he cut out one of their happy predictions and took it to Church with him. But the spirits have given him information contrary to that given by Jesus. He asked that "Till death do us part," be omitted from the marriage service, as he did not believe that death ends human association. All the same Jesus told him that in Heaven there is neither marriage nor giving in marriage. The spirits are wiser.

The *New Statesman* gives us the following under "This England" :—

And, just as Joan of Arc was canonized as a saint years after she was burnt as a witch, so the *Evening Standard's* leading articles, rejected in their generation, will be resurrected and adored by the Macanlays and Gibbons of countless centuries to come.

We think, in justice to the *Standard*, that humour is breaking out in its leader column owing, possibly, to its proximity to David Low's cartoons.

Mr. Henry W. Nevinson vouchsafes an answer to a question asked by a branch of the Methodist Church recently. This was "What will Hell be like?" He writes : "Might we not adapt a line from Marlowe's 'Doctor Faustus'; 'For where we are is Hell.?'"

We learn that :—

The Monks of Mount St. Bernard's Abbey, Charnwood Forest, have been awarded second prize in this year's Leicestershire County egg-laying trials.

To meet trials of that kind it can be admitted that a substantial trial of the Christian virtues is necessary.

The British and Foreign Bible Society reports that "more Bibles are being sold in Germany than *Mein Kampf*." The numbers were doubled in 1939. All's well with the world!

The *Catholic Herald* is annoyed at the word "Catholics," which is obtaining currency in the United States.

Well, this much can be said for it, that there will be little doubt in the mind of a well-informed man as to its significance. And those who are guilty of the expression "Catholic Truth" should be the last to affect a delicate taste in words.

Father Woodlock is making heavy-handed attempts to put up a score for the Holy Mother Church. He quotes from H. G. Wells' article in the symposium on the "Rights of Man," in the *Daily Herald* :—

The brain upon which my experiences have been written is not a particularly good one.

Father Woodlock then goes on to say, "Let me illustrate how true this is . . ." But this surely is taking an unfair advantage. Mr. Wells has not, it must be borne in mind, had the advantage enjoyed by a priest of having had his head touched and greased by someone in the direct line of succession to the Gods themselves. The Holy Father should learn to be merciful. It is as if, in a bout of fistieuffs, he has been furnished with a horse-shoe concealed in his boxing glove.

The Archbishop of Canterbury, who must really be a reincarnation of Bagstock, who was "sly, devilish sly," says he has had a great many appeals for a national day of prayer, and that if he were to call for one now "action would be misrepresented by the enemy." But the enemy knows that the Archbishop believes in God, also that it is his business to bring all things before God, and he has already said that it is with God's help that we shall win the war. How can a day of prayer deceive the enemy? Does he mean that it will be taken by them to mean that we must be in sore straits if we have to depend upon God? It looks like it.

Or is the Archbishop as artful as ever? He promises that he will consider calling a day of prayer in September. Why? Is he waiting to see which way the cat jumps? And what about God? Has he no feelings? May he not be offended by not being called on earlier, and say that if it takes the Archbishop a year to decide whether God can help or not they can now make the best of the mess by themselves? Artfulness can be carried too far, even by Archbishops.

We have often wondered what was the real story behind the one about Phil May, the great *Punch* artist, being received into the Roman Catholic Church. Actually, this happened on his death bed after a long illness, the result of May's inability for many years to refuse a drink at any time. It appears, however, that the then editor of *Punch*, Sir Francis Burnand, was a Catholic, and May "wished to die in the same religion as his 'Boss.'" Nothing here about the sudden recognition that the Church was God's Own, and that only in its bosom could the repentant sinner be saved, and all the other well-worn arguments. We fancy that a glimmer of the humour that made Phil May famous all over the world lay behind his conversion.

How religion in the particular form of Christianity fortifies the courage and strengthens the morals, should be well known to the world by now. But let Dr. W. R. Inge, ex-dean of St. Paul's, come forward to attest it. Moved by the issue of "Thoughts on War Time," written by the Archbishop of York, the worthy doctor, in a recent article in the *Evening Standard*, mournfully deprecates war-mongering, especially with reference to Germany as mere or less a victim. This so moves him that he cries despairingly: "The war has killed the England that I have known and loved. I pray that Providence will release me before I see the ruin which must come upon us, through inflation and bankruptcy (our italics) whether we win or lose it." . . . First mark that this good "man of God" has not the courage to name his Master. Next note the reason he offers for wishing he may die:—financial! Of course, he may have a thought for a decline in civilization, a fall in moral values, the weeping and wailing of thousands or millions bereaved, and general starvation. He may: but his lament sounds more like

fear of losing the comfortable circumstances and environment of a charming country house, together with all the emoluments he yet enjoys in "the England he has known and loved." That will be the predominant feeling of most ecclesiastics, no doubt, but few would acknowledge it.

We are not greatly interested in the ancient legends about the death of Jesus Christ. But we note with some surprise that the *Church of England Newspaper* recognizes in the old story that if Jesus was put to death:—

It is clear that the religious leaders and the religious people were guilty of conniving together to bring about the verdict and sentence against Jesus.

Let it go at that. The *Church of England Newspaper* quotes as its authority the only "history" of these events, namely, the gospels. There has been nothing in the subsequent records of religious fanaticism to suggest any improbability in a tale which tells of false witness, miscarriages of justice or straightforward murder in the name of and approved by religious mobs.

It is time that the authorities dealt faithfully with the lie that magistrates and others often try to make the public believe, that a lack of religious education is responsible for whatever evil deeds are being dealt with in our police courts. Dr. J. D. Jones, the well-known Free Church leader, contradicts the assertion of the *Times* supporting this lie and says:—

Now that is simply not true. The religious education given in our day schools may be inadequate, but nothing is gained by such gross exaggeration as characterizes that sentence. There may be a school here and there in which there is no religious teaching (as the *Times* writer asserts), though I have never discovered a school of that sort. In all the schools I know, religious instruction is regularly given, and is given in the morning hour when the minds of the scholars are freshest and brightest.

We do not expect this disclaimer will have the least influence on those who are fighting for more religion in the schools. To lie for the glory of God is a very old Christian practice.

An article in the *Church of England Newspaper* reminds us that there has been constant difference of opinion among the Fathers of the Church as to the meaning of their own creeds since creeds were first invented. For example, the *Church of England Newspaper* asks: "what is meant by the petition 'Lead us not into temptation'?" From St. Augustine down to the Rev. R. J. Campbell these funny words have perplexed the elect. King Henry the Eighth found relaxation from his matrimonial problems to argue this matter out with Archbishop Cranmer. Henry, who had some experience of certain forms of "temptation," probably agreed with Oscar Wilde, who said: "I can resist everything except temptation." The first English prayer book introduced by King Edward the Sixth produced the present form of this clause in the Lord's Prayer. Since then the critics have played puss-in-the-ring with it. Bishop Gore and Canon Deane disputed about it, and now Chancellor Campbell not merely gives his own views, but modestly adds:—"I cannot think that our Lord had a different intention from this." Our Lord must be exceedingly grateful to Mr. Campbell after so many centuries of misinterpretation of what Christ meant to say . . . but didn't.

Canon Rees, of St. Paul's, assures his flocks (and herds) that they cannot become unbaptized. Once baptized, you are in it for all eternity. But in case one of the baptized imagines that the privilege is (Sam Goldwyn would say) actually worth the water it is written on, the Canon goes on to say that although their baptism "sets Christians apart from the world"—yet we may be bad Christians; we may be lost eternally in hell." The advantages of the Christian Sacrament of Baptism seems a trifle over-rated even if they have become—after Confirmation—"members of a priestly nation, a new Israel." To tell us after all this that we can go to hell, seems neither polite nor politic.

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To circulating and distributing the *Freethinker*, F. Lanigan, Lt., Enrys Williams (Detroit), 10s.

W. L. STEPHENSON.—Your assumption that because you have detected an error in the *Freethinker* therefore we must be wrong in not believing in the existence of God is amusing, but not very convincing.

H. WARRINGTON.—We cannot pass a definite opinion unless we see a copy of the clause in the will. It will, of course, be treated as a matter of strict confidence.

T. REID.—Thanks for your appreciation of the *Freethinker*. We wish we could realise your wish that "every young man and woman should become a life subscriber." Anyway, if all our friends would lend a hand in securing new subscribers they would at least contribute to that result.

D. S. W.—We are not likely to be caught napping, and we have taken all reasonable care. But while we may prepare for trouble, we see no sense in groaning about it till it arrives.

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

Sugar Plums

In spite of the war we are hoping for a good attendance on Whit Sunday at the Annual Conference in Manchester. Those who intend being present should write as early as possible to the General Secretary, giving the length of their stay and what accommodation they desire. The sooner the information is given the better.

We are in the midst of a war, a kind of war that our military leaders never foresaw—military leaders never do foresee anything except along the lines that have been. They saw only an intensification of the last war, and with regard to that there came the clotted bosh that there would be no more European wars because directly war was declared, or before it was declared, London and Berlin and Paris would be nothing but heaps of smouldering ruin. Laymen backed up military men in this kind of nonsense. As though anything could be devised by man so dangerous that some would not face it.

Yet we are at war—for liberty—but we shall have to keep our eyes open and our courage high if we are not to end with losing the war for liberty—at home. At present the rule of law, in any reasonable sense is getting feebler and feebler. We are being governed by decree, and it is only by a misuse of language that we can call that the rule of law. A Dictator is a Dictator, and whether he is appointed Dictator or makes himself one makes no difference whatever to this issue. A decree is issued and the function of the law courts is to see that the Dictator's decree is carried out. All this may or may not be necessary in a state of war. The fact is it is here. And a man must be more than usually stupid if he does not recognize that when the war is over whatever government exists will cling lovingly to the rule of the decree. It is such a splendid cover for incompetency.

As a very handy summary of what has been done in this way, not a complete account by any means, we commend heartily *Bureaucracy Run Mad*, by Martin Abbotson (Watts and Co. 1s. 3d.). Mr. Abbotson gives a

running outline of the antics of bureaucracy up to date in a number of directions. Most of these have been described in one or another of our papers, but the general reader forgets so soon what he reads, and becomes so accustomed to the curtailing of a freedom that, so far as the mass of people are concerned, was forced on them rather than won by them, that the author has done a very useful work in summarizing how bureaucracy works. Submit to much of this we must during war, but unless we keep alive to its methods and its evils, we shall find that when the war is over we shall have to transfer the fight for freedom from the continent to our own land. Government by decree differs but little from military law, and military law, as more than one authority has declared, is not law at all. We advise here the expenditure of fifteen pence, even if it involves one visit less to the cinema or cutting our cigarette ration down by one packet of twenty.

There has been a little delay in filling the orders for the bound volume of the *Freethinker* for 1939, owing to unforeseen circumstances. Orders have now been carried out. Those who have any intention of acquiring a copy of the volume would help by sending their order as soon as possible. The price is 17s. 6d., postage 1s. There are few annual volumes that can successfully compete with it for value and interest.

Mr. Donald Dale writes in reply to Mr. Reckitt:—

Mr. Reckitt writes of me:—"Mr. Dale begins his letter with a sentence so foolish that I hardly had patience to read what followed: 'Prayer therefore (wherefore?) is and has by experience proved to be useless.'"

May I point out to you again that I did not begin my letter like this? What I said went like this:—

"Man has no evidence whatsoever of any value, that he will be granted any favours by prayer. He has been endowed with the means of providing for his wants and requirements, and he has no reason for expecting that the laws of Nature will, or can be, upset in his favour, to the probable detriment and inconvenience of living beings in other parts of the world. Prayer therefore is, and has by experience proved to be, useless."

The passage Mr. Dale gives was in the opening of the letter we printed. We were compelled to delete this owing to want of space. In such cases we have to reject the letter or leave out that part which seems least important. Naturally, correspondents will disagree with us as to our judgment at times.

The following is from the *Evening Standard*:—

A small group of friends of the celebrated criminal lawyer, the late Clarence Darrow, stood on a small bridge in a cold drizzle in Jacksonpark Lagoon, Chicago. It was two years to the hour after Darrow's death.

They were trying to reach his spirit.

The group included Darrow's widow's son Paul, and Claude Noble, a magician friend. The bridge was Darrow's favourite retreat.

The Lord's Prayer was recited. Then Noble, holding a hymn-book which Darrow had autographed, lifted his face to the sky and intoned: "Clarence Darrow, I am here in fulfilment of our pact. If you can manifest yourself, do so now."

After addressing Darrow's "spirit," Noble held out the hymn-book and explained: "If Darrow is present in spirit, his presence will create vibrations which will strike this book from my hand."

He waited a full minute, but nothing happened.

If the story is true, we may assume that, as Darrow had no belief in either God or a future life, the "pact" referred to amounted only to a sarcastic challenge. And as nothing happened when the test was made we do not imagine for a moment that it will weaken the other party's belief in one of the oldest superstitions in human history.

One of our valued correspondents points out that in last week's issue we wrote of the darkness that overspread the land for "three days" following the death of Jesus. The time should have been "three hours." We apologise for the error, but, to paraphrase Voltaire, if we could believe in the three hours we should not hesitate at three days. Faith should be capable of swallowing the extension.

The "Purposes" of God

MUCH of the current religious attempts to discover what sort of "purpose" God can possibly have in arranging—or permitting—the present group of wars, serve at least one good use. These investigations of the "Divine Plan" serve as a sort of Nemesis pursuing those who thought that the "watch" analogy proved somehow that there was divine design in the universe. To students of Paley and Watson it is decidedly amusing to imagine anyone looking on at the ghastliest bloodthirstiness of all history and saying: "Ah, here is something so horrible that no human being could possibly have invented it—it MUST have been the work of God."

There is of course no unanimity as to God's part in creating war. Some clerics say God invented it to punish man's sins. Some say Satan—the very Devil—is the culprit. Other clerics of equal standing assure us that Man has defied a good god and has conquered the Almighty Will of a pacifistic deity. All three theorists can bring various arguments "about it and about," but there is one inescapable issue which the theist cannot evade in the tribunal of logic. If God does not KNOW there's a war he can't know much. So unconscious a God may be and will be dismissed as absolutely useless to mankind. God is in no better case if we convict Him of knowing and being indifferent. In the end the clerics will have to resign in a body or come off their high horses; they will have in the end to acknowledge, as their barbarous forefathers did, that if there be a God He WILLS wars and every other vileness which mankind have endeavoured so often and so long to bring to an end.

The difference is mainly that ages of anti-theistic protest and criticism have dragged the apologists into the arena of debate. Our Fathers refused to condemn God, or to judge Him by human moral standards. God has nowadays to defend Himself—by proxy, of course, as the Divine Defendant is always "represented by Counsel" and never appears "in person." Perhaps if God could only see some of His well-paid Counsel and hear their miserable reading of their ridiculously self-contradictory arguments, He would certainly plead guilty, and throw Himself upon the mercy of the Court.

Brother Edward, of Bewdley, asks in the *Guardian* (February 23, 1940): "What is God's purpose?" He says:—

May not a good deal of the bewilderment in men's minds to-day be due to a mistaken idea of God's purposes?

Whence comes this expectation of "a better world," "a world won for Christ," in this present age? Is it not true that from Christ's own lips we have a different expectation? "The days of Noe, the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah," were the condition He foretold as that of the world, when He should come again; "Nation against Nation, Kingdom against Kingdom."

If that is what we may call "the will of Christ" we can only say He is getting what he asked for. Mr. (or Brother) Edward seems to think that Christ was not worrying Himself about such trifles as Slavery, Wars, Poverty and Disease. Brother Edward's "true interpretation" of "purpose" is just these three purely sectarian objects:—

1. That Christ would hasten His coming, and bring in His Kingdom.
2. For the conversion of the Jews.
3. That, for the Elect's sake, He will shorten these days and grant us grace to witness and to endure to the end.

Another writer in the same issue of the same journal

says (talking of "evil," including all kinds of "suffering") :—

Nothing is more abhorrent to self than suffering—using the word in its widest application—mental, moral, physical, spiritual, etc.

Nothing, therefore, presents the question "God or self; my will or His?" so directly nor generally to men as the experience of suffering, coming, as it does, by permission of God. . . . Suffering, therefore, has in it something of the nature of privilege.

How that writer must envy the slum children of our worst areas, the earthquake victims of God's love in Turkey, and the many millions "damned into the world" to suffer and die as children. We are rightly shocked at the inhumanity of those who shoot with machine guns and bombs harmless Lightship men. Does Brother Edward exercise similar indifference to human morality as do God and those guilty of these acts of cruelty? If not, it is clear that the source of his goodness of heart is secular and human, not revealed or taught by God or His Holy Word.

The Dean of Exeter said not long ago (see the *Guardian*, October 27, 1939) :—

Religion—or anyhow the Christian religion—does not exist in order to have an effect on human conduct.

The Dean went on to explain that Religion exists merely "in simple language an Act of God." His references to "the ancient Roman Augurs" who "as a preliminary to State action reported the result of their observation of the sky or of the interiors of slaughtered birds" seem to indicate that Prayer is useless, and we can only guess (or read the Bible—or the sky—or the entrails of dead birds to find out) what on earth God is up to. We cannot divert Him from His purpose. We can only look up to Heaven, or employ expensive sky-pilots to reveal what His purpose really is.

A certain Bishop (he of Kensington), who doubtless knows as much about God's Purposes as his Very Reverend Brother of Exeter, says that "the mind of man has no adequate answer to the problem of suffering." But then, he goes on to say, we mere human beings "in our solutions we have only thought in terms of this life" and he proceeds to dole out the usual clerical rubbish about the advantages of being dead. After all, what is this insignificant little day of our human life? These "other-worldians," as George Eliot called them, point to death as man's real birth-day. It is a tacit admission that God has no purpose at all in regard to the only life we know of; God's purpose apparently is not the ennobling of life but the glorification of death.

Painters like Dürer and Holbein devoted their genius to depicting the "Dance of Death"—they knew the unimportance of life; they accepted the creed of Except a man die he cannot live (based on the ignorance which imagines a seed to be dead instead of buried *alive*). The Bible (essentially the Book of the Dead) "praises the dead which are already dead than the living which are yet alive." The "purpose" of all the gods is death to mortals. Canon Rees, of St. Paul's, preached recently on "The Necessity of Death" (*Church Times*, February 23, 1940). He said:

The Christian possessor already of eternal life in his Baptism, can use every moment that is left to him for growing up in that life, and for shedding the temporal life which, in the phrase of Gregory the Great, is only "a kind of prolixity of death." Every time you lie down to sleep, you may . . . in tranquillity and confidence and peace of heart prepare yourself for the bed of the grave. "Except a grain of wheat fall into the ground and die, it cannot bear

fruit. But if it die, it beareth much fruit." . . . How different is the life of which Jesus Christ speaks from the pagan cults of life. . . . For His life is throughout devoted to death. It moves on with unfaltering pace towards the climax of the Passion and the restored and transfigured life of Easter morning. It is that life, devoted to death, which you and I and every Christian have inherited in Holy Baptism; for that life, and that alone, is worthy to be offered to the living and true God.

Perhaps the most illuminating of recent clerical pronouncements on this subject—the Purpose of God in permitting, if not indeed directly inflicting disgusting and horrible suffering on mankind—will be found in a B.B.C. sermon by the Rev. Max Warren, of Cambridge. We quote from the *Church of England Newspaper* (March 8, 1940):—

Some of you must have felt at least a moment's irritation, when you read the subject of this talk—"Christ triumphant over pain and suffering." For there are many who cannot understand how, from the experience of Jesus Christ 1,900 years ago, they can draw any relief from the deep agony of their own pain, from the bewilderment of their own sense of frustration, from the bitterness of their own bereavement, from the heartbreak of watching a loved one suffer. And what has Jesus Christ got to do with the rising tide of the world's misery?

It is so unreal, isn't it, to talk about Christ triumphant over pain and suffering? Now I believe that if you want to be real you must translate the word "over" by the word "through"—triumphant through pain and suffering.

This frankly throws overboard the orthodox idea of God's purpose, as expressed in the words "triumphant over pain." The substitution of "through" for "over" is equivalent to saying that a bad leg can be "cured" by amputating it at the thigh. Such a substitution makes nonsense of all pretence of prevention, amelioration or cure. Believing thus, it is obvious that the more man suffers the better. We ought, therefore, to applaud all the worst of earth's villains, including slave-owners, tyrants, torturers: ancient and modern. If it is true that we are "made perfect through suffering," we might name many who to-day are effectively carrying out God's purpose.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

Scientific History and Christianity

II.

THE mass of puerile and irrational matter written by the earlier Christian leaders is astounding. Quotations from Gregory the Great's book of miracles and legends, and his commentary on the Book of Job have been given in an article on that eminent personage. And to these we have to add a passage from one of his sermons dealing with the imminent end of the world. After stating that some of the signs are already accomplished, and that others we dread are close upon us, he goes on to say: "For we now see that nation arises against nation. . . . Earthquakes overwhelm countless cities. . . . Pestilence we endure without interruption. It is true that as yet we do not behold signs in the sun, moon and stars; but that these are not far off we may infer from changes in the atmosphere." And he adds: "Before Italy was given over to be desolated by a heathen foe, we beheld fiery ranks in the heaven, and even the streaming blood of the human race as it was afterwards spill."

The intellectual degradation extended beyond the

clericalists, though, of course, they were the fount and origin of the whole disastrous feature. History had disappeared, having fallen to chronicles. Ekkehard, an important chronicler, after mentioning that a boy had been born with a double set of limbs, another with two heads, some lambs with two heads and colts with great teeth, stated that by these and other signs "the whole creation seemed to offer its services to the Creator."

Here and there a Christian recognized the deplorable condition of learning. Robinson remarks that Gregory, the half illiterate Bishop of Tours, was the only historical writer of importance in the sixth century, and that he exclaimed, in bad Latin, "Woe to us, for the study of books has perished from among us." And it is added that between the time of Theodorich and Charlemagne three hundred years elapsed, during which scarcely a person could be found who could write out, even in the worst of Latin, an account of the events of his day." (*Medieval and Modern Times*).

It is agreed that the intellectual débâcle that accompanied and followed the establishment of Christianity was not so complete, or at least not so rapid, in the Eastern (Byzantine) Empire. But, as Breasted points out, Justinian (crowned in 527) closed the schools of philosophy (the "university") of Athens; and he adds, "To the authority of the State over the beliefs of its people Augustine added the authority of the Church. Thus ended all intellectual liberty in the ancient world." (*Ancient Times*.) As regards the difference between life in the later Roman Empire and in the barbarian areas, it is significant that after the Church had become powerful, people were apt to leave the former for the latter. Salvian, a Christian priest, writing on *God's Government*, about 450, has the following:—

So the poor are despoiled, the widows sigh, the orphans are oppressed, until many of them, born of families not obscure, and liberally educated, flee to our enemies that they may no longer suffer the oppression of public persecution. They doubtless seek humanity among the barbarians, because they cannot bear barbarian inhumanity among the Romans. And although they differ from the people to whom they flee in manner and in language; although they are unlike as regards the foetid odour of the barbarians' bodies and garments, yet they would rather endure a foreign civilization among the barbarians than cruel injustice among the Romans.

So they migrate to the Goths, or to the Bagaudes, or to some other tribe of barbarians who are ruling everywhere, and do not regret their exile. For they would rather live free under an appearance of slavery than live as captives under an appearance of liberty. The name of Roman citizen, once so highly esteemed and so dearly bought, is now a thing that men repudiate and flee from. . . .

And lest it should be supposed that the pagan or heretic barbarians were the only or even the chief delinquents the account continues:—

The Saxon race is cruel, the Franks are faithless, the Gepidae are inhuman, the Huns are unchaste—in short, there is vice in all the barbarian peoples. But are their offences as serious as ours? Is the intemperance of the Alemanni so base as the intemperance of the Christians? Does the greed of the Alani so merit condemnation as the greed of the Christians? . . .

All the American books cited have something to say about the monasteries. But the facts given, and the remarks made about these institutions in the American books differ a good deal from those we read in English books (other than those of well informed Secularists). Botsford states that every bishopric was expected to have a school, the sole object of which

was to give instruction in religion and theology necessary for the clergyman; he adds that in the more liberal monasteries, however, the monks spent part of their time in writing historical and theological works, and in copying the ancient classics which still existed. Breasted tells us that among the motives which led people to enter monasteries were that they were safe and peaceful places for those of a studious and thoughtful disposition and furnished a refuge for the friendless, an asylum for the disgraced, and food and shelter for the indolent, who would otherwise have had to earn their living. Robinson says little about the monasteries; he mentions the copying, but not the education.

Of course the absence of genuine intellectualism paved the way to the deplorable moral degeneration that developed, among the clergy as well as the laity. And in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries we meet with that curious feature, the intense condemnation of the evil lives of clerics of all ranks in the literary productions of the troubadours and others:—

I see the Pope his sacred trust betray,
For while the rich can gain his grace alway,
His favours from the poor are aye withholden.
He strives to gather wealth as best he may,
Forcing Christ's people to obey
So that he may repose in garments golden . . .
No better is each honoured cardinal.
From early morning's dawn to evening's fall
Their time is passed in eagerly contriving
To drive some bargain foul with each and all.
So if you feel a want, or great or small,
Or if for some preferment you are striving,
The more you please to give the more 'twill bring,
Be it a purple cap or bishop's ring.
And it need ne'er in any way alarm you
That you are ignorant of everything
To which a minister of Christ should cling.

Our bishops, too, are plunged in similar sin,
For pitifully they flay the very skin
From all the priests who chance to have fat livings.
For gold their seal official you can win
To any writ, no matter what's therein.

Then as for priests and minor clerks
There are, God knows, too many of them whose works
And daily life belie their daily teaching.
Scarce better are they than so many Turks . . .
For, learned or ignorant, they're ever bent
To make a traffic of each sacrament,
The mass's holy sacrament included;
And when they shrive an honest penitent,
Who will not bribe, his penance they augment,
For honesty should never be obtruded—
But this, by sinners fair, is easily eluded.

'Tis true that monks and friars make ample show
Of rules austere which they all undergo,
But this the vainest is of all pretences.
In sooth, they live full twice as well we know.
As e'er they did at home, despite their vow,
And all their mock parade of abstinences.
No jollier life than theirs can be, indeed;
And specially the beggar friars exceed,
Whose frock grants license as abroad they wander.
These motives 'tis which to the orders lead
So many worthless men, in sorest need
Of self, which on their vices they may squander,
And then, the frock protects them in their plunder.

(From a poem by RAIMON DE CORNET.)

The German minnesinger, Walther von der Vogelweide, passes still more devastating strictures on the Popes; and he makes an interesting reference to that great French scholar, Gerbert, who it is said studied at a Moorish University in Spain, was afterwards regarded in Christendom as a magician in league with the devil, though he became Pope Silvester II.:—

St. Peter's chair is filled to-day as well
As when 'twas fouled by Gerbert's sorcery;
For he consigned himself alone to hell.
While this pope thither drags all Christientie . . .

Thy work is hindered and thy word gainsaid.
Thy treasurer steals the wealth that thou hast stored.
Thy ministers rob here and murder there,
And o'er thy sheep a wolf has shepherd's care.

Further fulmination against the vices of the clergy is contained in *The Revelation of Goliath the Bishoppe*. Professor Robinson states that this poem was not improbably written by a very clever clergyman, Walter Mape or Mapes, who was a member of a literary circle which Henry II., of England, gathered about him. The author is represented as caught up to heaven, where he sees visions such as those recounted in the Book of Revelation in the Bible.

After a burst of thunder a "goodlie personage" appears, bids the poet "marke well and understand," and then brings out a book, with seven titles and seven seals:—

Anon a certaine power there was that opened cleare
The formost chapter's seale, and then I did espie
Foure beasts, whose shape eche one unlike to other were
But nothings yet at all in gesture contrarie.

The first of theise foure beasts a lion semde to be,
The secound like a caulfe, the third an eagle stout,
The fourthe was like a man; and they had wings to flie,
And full of even they were, and turn'd like wheels about.

And when unclosed was the first sealles knotte anon,
And I perused well the chapter thorough cleare,
And afir that I bent my whole sight thereupon,
Whereof the title was as here it may appear. . . .

J. REEVES

(To be continued)

The Ark and the Covenant

WHATEVER may be the truth connected with the symbolism of Noah's Ark, it would be very interesting if one could get at the mystery—if there is a mystery—behind the Ark of the Covenant.

As far as the orthodox are concerned, whether Jewish or Christian, there is of course no mystery. The story, as given in the Bible, gives the facts; it is open, clear, and authentic, and nothing more should be said about it. The ark of the covenant was a small chest and it contained a golden pot, which preserved some of the original manna; Aaron's rod, which miraculously budded and blossomed; and the original tables of the Ten Commandments written, as we all know, by the finger of God himself. The Bible contradicts itself a little on the question, but that is a small matter for the faithful.

The Ark seems to have been carried about a good deal by priests, and no doubt inspired a tremendous amount of awe and reverence among the children of Israel. It also had some extraordinary adventures duly recorded in Holy Writ, but by no means enthusiastically recounted by priests, Christian or Jewish. Cassell's *Bible Dictionary*, in fact, shirks the details rather unaccountably, as no work that I know comes anywhere near it for complete Fundamentalism. "It will answer no useful purpose," says the writer, "to continue the details of the well-known subsequent history of the ark of the covenant." This is rather a pity as its subsequent history is typical of a priest- and superstition-ridden people—of course quite excusable under the circumstances.

The ark was called "ark of Yahwe," "ark of God," and "ark of our God," and then became the "ark of the *b'rith*"—that is "covenant"—or the "ark of the *b'rith* of Yahwe" or "of Elohim" or "of Adonai." *B'rith* is translated "covenant," but authorities seem to be at loggerheads as to what the word actually means. It fact they have

made such intensive studies as to its meaning that we had better leave them to it. Hebrew seems to have been a perpetual battle-ground of such studies.

The point to remark, however, is that carrying about a god in a box was quite an ancient custom, and we know for a fact that something very much like the ark of the covenant was carried about by the Egyptians. The very orthodox Dr. Eadie tries to minimise the force of this. He says:—

The monuments of Egypt have brought to light various representations of a sacred chest, not unlike the Hebrew ark, borne, like it, on the shoulders of priests, and having around it symbolic figures or sphinxes, somewhat similar to the supposed form of the Hebrew cherubim. Such resemblance to portions of the furniture of Egyptian worship in the Hebrew ritual were a kind and wise adaptation to the circumstances of the ignorant and perverse people among whom Jehovah was pleased to institute his worship.

Of course, Jehovah could do no wrong though it is obvious from the above that Dr. Eadie would never have allowed that Israelitish priests, when they were inventing their ritual, simply copied and adapted that of the nations with whom they were in contact. As a matter of fact, the whole conception of the ark of the covenant was copied directly from the Egyptians by the Israelites as were many other things.

Canon T. K. Cheyne, who admits the possibility of this, is very troubled about the story of the capture of the ark by the Philistines, who were, in consequence, very elated about their victory, but who returned the god or gods in the box to their enemy. The learned theologian easily swallows the other stories about the ark, but he jibs at this one. It seems to be, he says, "historically impossible."

The strange thing about the ark of the covenant is that after all its early adventures both Saul and David appear to have forgotten about it. This is certainly a hard nut to crack. Both these kings were fervent believers in God—especially David—and it is hard to believe that they should have allowed their Deity to rest in a box away in a provincial town. In any case the ark's subsequent adventures have baffled investigators who can now only pose new problems without finding any key to the old difficulties.

However, David did send for the ark in the end, but one is not quite sure whether it was ever again carried about in battle. Perhaps David felt that this kind of thing was not quite right for a chief God, however useful it may have been for a tribal one. At all events, it was finally placed in the sanctuary of Solomon's temple, and then seems to have disappeared altogether. Even the most fervent theist is unable to explain God's utter indifference in this matter of his holy abode.

There is no suggestion in Dr. Cheyne's article in the *Encyclopedia Biblica* that nature worship or phallicism may have had something to do with the ark of the covenant; that the contents were simply a phallus or phalli. But the chapter on "Sacred Stones" in Grant Allen's *Evolution of the Idea of God* has no such qualms. After showing how such stones were worshipped all over the world Grant Allen deals with their worship in the Bible in great detail, beginning with the famous one used by Jacob as a pillow, and later with those he used as altars.

The difficulty with regard to the Bible narratives is that we have not got the "original" writings at all, but very much edited ones written—or made up—in the interests of certain sects among the Jews. It may be the "Priestly" or the "Elohistic" or the "Jehovistic" or a mixture of the three who had the final redaction; nobody knows for certain, but whatever it was, certain facts and details in the legends have been glossed over, and one must read more or

less between the lines to get at any understanding of the text.

At all events, Grant Allen is under no delusion as to the nature of the "portable god" Jahweh—as he calls him. He shows how in many passages in the Bible Jahweh is represented "especially as a god of increase, of generation, of populousness, of fertility." And he adds in support the very many passages in which Jahweh is prayed to by barren women—only if Israel obeys Jahweh implicitly will there be plenty of children, fruit, and flocks.

In the end, Grant Allen comes to the conclusion that Jahweh was a portable god probably made of a cylinder of stone exactly like similar stones in other parts of the world—he instances for example the famous god of India, Mahadeo—which "came early to be regarded, not merely as a memento of the dead and an abode of the ghost or indwelling god, but also in some mysterious and esoteric way as a representative of the male and generative principle." And he finishes his chapter on the "Gods of Israel" in this way:—

From this rude ethnical divinity, the mere sacred pillar of a barbarous tribe, was gradually developed the Lord God of later Judaism and of Christianity—a power eternal, omniscient, almighty, holy; the most ethereal, the most sublime, the most superhuman deity that the brain of man has ever conceived.

Grant Allen may have written that passage with his tongue in his cheek, though he tries in his later chapters to show "by what slow evolutionary process of syncretism and elimination, of spiritual mysticism and national enthusiasm, of ethical effort and imaginative impulse, that mighty God was at last projected out of so unpromising an original." The fact remains that no matter what was the process, "Almighty God" of the Christian and Jewish faiths was nothing more originally than a phallic stone pillar in a box; and the dreams or visions of prophets, priests, or poets, can never alter the fact.

At no time more than spring time—as was always the case perhaps—is God so earnestly prayed to, so passionately invoked, so desperately implored for help. And God has always remained silent. The great ethereal, omniscient, holy, Deity never says a word and never does a thing; exactly like his famous progenitor, the god in a box, the Ark of the Covenant.

H. CUTNER

Correspondence

OSCAR WILDE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR.—May I say, in reference to the letter from Mr. Syers, which appears in your current issue, that I am slightly acquainted with this gentleman, but I only met him for the first time about ten years ago? It is therefore impossible that he can have heard me utter the words which he attributes to me, nor as a matter of fact did I ever use such words. Mr. Syers must be a refreshingly innocent person if he is able to swallow all that fearful "bunk" about my poor father "lying in wait" for Wilde with the intention of "chastising" him. As I pointed out in my book, so ably reviewed by Mr. Du Cann in your columns and which Mr. Syers has evidently not read, Wilde was about four stone heavier and five inches taller than my father, and, if my father had even attempted to attack him, Wilde could and would have "wiped the floor" with him. On the only occasion when my father put himself into a position in which he might have carried out his silly threats of personal violence (which Wilde always treated with laughing contempt) he carefully refrained from taking advantage of the oppor-

tunity. I refer to the occasion on which he visited Wilde in his house in Tite Street accompanied by a prize-fighter. On that occasion Wilde, after listening to what my father had to say, ordered him out of the house, and my father went like a lamb. To quote from my book (page 63), "had my father attempted to attack him, Wilde could and would have picked him up and thrown him down the front door-steps . . . while as for the poor pugilist he was far too well behaved (as is the habit with pugilists, except when they are drunk) to interfere in an argument between two gentlemen."

ALFRED DOUGLAS

THE B.B.C.

SIR,—In a recent issue you kindly inserted a letter of mine in the correspondence about the B.B.C.'s boycott of unorthodox religious and philosophical views. May I describe a sequel?

I wrote to the B.B.C., and received a reply that they did not aim at mere "orthodoxy," but at giving broadcasts of as many Christian views as possible—but "could not consider rationalism (note: small "r"!) or any denomination not in the main stream of Christian tradition." This, of course, is the same as saying "we do not aim at mere orthodoxy, but only at orthodoxy"! So I replied thus:—

"I wrote not as an advocate of Rationalism or any other ism, but simply from the viewpoint of a believer in fair play and the value of full discussion. I agree with the view of the late J. S. Mill, in his essay on 'Liberty,' that one who knows only his own side of a case does not know even that, and that full freedom is essential to a healthy public opinion. That is why I think the B.B.C. ban on any but 'conventional' religious or philosophical views is harmful as well as unjust."

I have just seen in a daily paper: "B.B.C. Lift Ban.—The B.B.C. will lift a ban of many years' standing on Monday, when the first commentary on greyhound racing will be given in the Home and Forces programmes by Mr. R. Glendenning, from Wembley at 3.40" (*The Daily Telegraph*, March 21, 1940). Surely it is odd if greyhound racing can be broadcast, but no constructive exposition of views of some of our greatest thinkers, past and present, is tolerated! As, however, you say the ban rests only on a decision of the B.B.C., and not on any legal requirement, it may be subject to reconsideration.

All I need to say, in addition to this is that what is wanted is an organized movement to oppose the boycott. That movement should not merely call for talks on Free-thought, but for a general abandonment of the "orthodox" monopoly. Many "unorthodox" people (Spiritualists, Unitarians, and others) are also aggrieved. The appeal should be for fair play. Anyone who is interested can write to me at 64, Sotheby Road, Highbury, London, N.5. Enclosure of stamped addressed envelope is not essential, but would be a help.

J. W. POYNTER

THE ARK

SIR,—I must thank Mr. Archibald Robertson for his correcting the statement I took from J. W. Lake's *Mythos of the Ark* on the derivation of the word "Ark." As a matter of fact I looked up the word, when writing my article, in Webster's *New International Dictionary*; and seeing that the Middle English form was spelt "arche" like the Greek, and noting that both in French and in German it was "arche," I took it that Lake was right. On these matters I regret I am at the mercy of my authorities.

H. CUTNER

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD APRIL 7, 1940

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen in the Chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Rosetti (A. C.), Bryant,

Precece, Seibert, Ebury, Griffiths, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly financial statement presented.

New members were admitted to Manchester, Glasgow, Chorley, West London, North London, West Ham Branches and the Parent Society.

Details in connexion with open-air work were discussed and decisions reached. Progress in the general arrangements for the annual conference was reported.

A return to Thursday Executive meetings was decided upon and the next meeting fixed for May 2.

The proceedings then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1.): 11.0, Professor J. C. Flugel, D.Sc.—"A Psychological Study of Marriage."

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 5 p.m. Various Speakers.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

ROSSENDALE (Left Book Club, The Liberal Club, Waterfoot): 8.0, Friday, April 12, Mr. J. Clayton—"Politics and Religion."

OUTDOOR

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Blackburn Market): 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton—A Lecture.

DARLINGTON (Market Steps): 6.30, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Sunday and Sins."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Eccles Market): 6.30, Friday-Bury Market, 6.30, Saturday. Stevenson Square, 3.0, Sunday. Ashton Market, 6.30, Sunday. Mr. W. A. Atkinson.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market): 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTHEND BRANCH N.S.S. (Marine Parade): Sunday after-noon, Mr. G. Taylor will speak

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THE *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was originally registered on August 5, 1925. Until that date the practice had been for many years to issue an annual appeal to make good the deficit on the issue of the paper. It was suggested by some of the constant subscribers that in order to do away with this annual appeal subscribers should capitalize their gifts and create a fund which would bring in an amount adequate to cover the inevitable deficit on a paper of this description. This was done, and a sum of £8,000 subscribed in a little over two years. When the two years losses had been made—the annual subscription was suspended during the raising of the £8,000—there was left a capital sum of just over £7,000 for investment. The income at an all round yield of five per cent did not meet the deficit, but we have managed to get along. Of late nearly half the invested capital has been repaid, and re-investment involved a loss of income. There has in addition been a rise in the cost of printing and also of wages.

By the terms of the Trust no Trustee may derive anything in the shape of payment, or emolument for services rendered, and in the event of the Trust being terminated as no longer necessary, the whole of the capital will be handed over to the National Secular Society for general propaganda purposes.

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