

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions

### The Racial Myth

AMONG our exchanges the *New Zealand Rationalist* is always very welcome. It is very independent in its utterances, its writers are able and obviously honest and in "get-up" it is admirable. The last issue to hand is well up to standard. We wish it long life. It cannot avoid being useful if it continues on its present course. But in this issue there is, in the course of an article by Mr. P. L. Hardcastle, a curious reference to myself which I think is worthy of a lengthy note, mainly because it raises one or two points to which current events—world events—lend great significance. Mr. Hardcastle says:—

It is with the utmost regret that I find myself in violent disagreement with him [Chapman Cohen] regarding his attitude towards the present war. I feel that several reasons may be advanced to explain his position—extenuating circumstances, as the lawyer pleads—chief of which I submit to be his bitterness towards Germany as a result of that country's treatment of members of Chapman Cohen's own race, which may have temporarily cast a shadow over his usual clear thinking in these matters.

I do not wish to say a word with regard to what Mr. Hardcastle calls my attitude towards the war. I could not if I would, because he does not state wherein, or about what he differs. I feel quite certain that his disagreement is not "totalitarian," and that we are in some harmony on certain aspects of the war. Besides I have a very friendly feeling towards people who disagree with me. I like to feel that I am read by men and women who weigh what I have to say, and are not slow in expressing approval or disapproval. With regard to the *Freethinker* itself I like to think of all of us, writers and readers, as fellow-searchers after expanding truth. The greatest condemnation of any teacher is that his pupils never disagree with him.

What I strongly dislike is to receive a warning that

"I, A.B. solemnly declare that after reading an article in the *Freethinker* with which I do not agree, will not further subscribe to that journal until such time as the editor publishes his resolve that never again will he write or print an article with which I disagree." In such cases I feel that the *Freethinker* has strayed into the wrong hands. That man should keep to his Church—whether that Church be theological or political. If I have done anything to deserve Mr. Hardcastle's praise for "intellectual honesty and courageous opposition to humbug and hypocrisy in all its guises," it is because I have never given any serious thought to whether I pleased or displeased anyone.

What I desire to do is to make the following corrections in Mr. Hardcastle's statement. First, I am not conscious of any "bitterness towards Germany." If Mr. Hardcastle were to run through a volume of the *Freethinker*, taking both the "Views and Opinions" and the paragraph columns, he would be able to note how often I have stressed the fact that to speak of Germany, France, or Britain, as though they consisted of one individual, or that the people of any nation mentally stood for one opinion is foolish in the realm of thought, and very nearly criminal in the world of action. When a man says or writes that Germany thinks, or England thinks, he is exhibiting the fact that his own thinking is not of a very high order. Even in the case of the present war there are all sorts of opinions, here and in other nations, about the cause of the war, its justification and the method of conducting it. If I were to say that the *New Zealand Rationalist* thinks—I should promptly and properly be told in a succeeding issue that I should have said this or that writer thinks, and the rebuke would be justified.

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### The Evil of Personification

I remember writing quite recently a strong criticism of Mr. Duff Cooper for venting the foolish remark that there was something about the German nature that differentiated it from the French or the British or other human nature. I branded that as scientifically absurd and sociologically dangerous. I do not know when and where I have ever exhibited bitterness towards Germany. I have been very bitter towards some Germans, but only as I should have been very bitter towards some Englishmen or Frenchmen had they acted in the same manner. I remember being bitter towards Frenchmen in the Dreyfus affair, towards the British in the Irish Black and Tan business, and so forth. Mr. Hardcastle, I suspect, has fallen into the common vulgarism of unscientific personification. It is done in the political world and also in the international world, and, of course, markedly in the religious world. It is quite easy and quite simple. The capitalist personified, the workmen personified, the Germans personified is an easy method of developing hatred for a multitude. But one cannot hate or

love the whole of seventy millions of men and women and children; one cannot even visualize that number, any more than one can love or hate the *individuals* who make up the mass of "capitalists" or "proletarians." But personify the group, reduce the millions to one person and the dullest—the duller the better—can visualize the figure and indulge in hearty hatred, or the reverse. So it has been with Freethinkers in relation to the religious world. The Freethinker, as pictured, was a figure that invited hatred. But when Freethinkers became common—well, when people were told what monuments of villainy *all* Freethinkers were, the ordinary man thought of the Freethinker he knew, and that talk became stupid.

But I am not bitter when I say that the present German leaders offer, with rare exceptions, a collection of the vilest scoundrels that ever crawled the earth. I am not aware of bitterness, I am offering a cold-blooded estimate, and not making my estimate of these men depend upon obsession with a special economic, political, or class theory. But I should expect, nay, I know, that apart from these distortions represented by Goebbels, Goering, Hitler, and a proportion of the younger generation that has been brutalized from infancy, the German people are much like other people, with the same capacities for good and evil that are possessed by others, but with the expression of them modified or exaggerated in terms of education and training. Long ago Burke said he did not know how to draw up an indictment against a whole nation. I agree with Burke.

\* \* \*

#### The Power of Prejudice

But the really surprising thing is contained in the statement that my bitterness towards (I will put the matter accurately) German Nazism, and those who control it, is due to my belonging to the Jewish race and because of the ill-treatment of Jews. My correction of that curious error is, first, there is no such thing as a Jewish race; second I am not a Jew and never have been. I am descended from people who were believers in the Jewish religion, but that offers no better warranty for my claiming to be a Jew than I have to call a man who is descended from Roman Catholics a follower of the Pope. If we are to work along the lines indicated by Mr. Harcastle, I expect I should adorn him with some kind of a Christian label, Roman Catholic or one of the many brands of Protestantism. It is a bad plan to confuse even "race" with religion. And Judaism is not, and never was, more than a religion. Certainly for the past two thousand years there have been followers of the Jewish religion settled in many parts of the world including India and China. To deny that these people are not Chinese or Indians, to say that the Jews who have been settled on the Rhine for about fifteen centuries are not yet Germans is ridiculous. To move along that line is to adopt the insane sociology of the Nazi Government. Jews have been settled in Italy for even a longer period than in Germany. They were there before the Christian Church was heard of. Of what nationality are they? I am not and never was more concerned over the torture and robbery of Jews by the German Government than I was by the torture and robbery of non-Jews. If there was a greater amount of meanness displayed in the torture of the Jews, that made the assault more contemptible because it appealed to the ignorance of masses of non-Jews; but Freethinkers, above all people, should be well on their guard against the evil of confusing essential issues.

If possible, to belong to the Jewish race is just a trifle more remarkable than that of being a Jew with-

out believing in the Jewish religion, or being a Roman Catholic without believing in the Roman Catholic religion.

There is no single word in our language that covers more hazy ideas, feeds more prejudices, justifies greater injustices, and is of less scientific value than "race." At one moment it means family descent, at another a mere species, at another it has a linguistic reference, the use of a common language, or it may carry such a meaning as a race of shopkeepers or artists, or yet again the possession of some cranial peculiarity which in practice gives us no safe indication of the habits, the beliefs, the customs of the people who possess the cranial characteristic in question.

The scientific ignorance of our own political leaders is never more clearly manifested than when we hear them talking of the "British race," a people with as mongrel a descent as any in the world, and which is all the better for the mixture. I must leave it to Mr. Harcastle to explain how I am affected by something which does not exist, and the scientific absurdity of which I have been stressing for quite half a century. I think John Stuart Mill hit the nail on the head when he said that "of all the vulgar modes of escaping from the consideration of the effect of social and moral influences on the human mind, the most vulgar is that of attributing the diversities of conduct and character to inherent natural differences." One of the earliest articles I contributed to this journal was one attacking this completely unscientific idea of "race" as a factor in social development.

I commend to Mr. Harcastle a re-reading of two books he has probably seen—Julian Huxley's *We Europeans*, and a much more elaborate work *Race and Civilization*, written by F. Hertz, some dozen years ago. When he does so I do not think he will again use that word "race."

\* \* \*

#### The Melting Pot

I must guard myself by saying that I do not deny differences in habit, in culture, in general outlook, in different groups or nationalities. These are so obvious that none but a fool would deny their existence. But these islands of ours have been peopled by folk from Ireland, France, Holland, Germany and from the Northern countries. What has become of their "racial" qualities? All that exists after a period is a people with habits and outlook, with tastes and appetites that we call British. What has become of the easy going, domesticated, music loving, philosophic Germans of the middle sixteenth century? There are always at work differences of education, of training, of general social influence, which result in difference of sentiment, of outlook and of behaviour; and there are also the pressure of influences that give rise to a commonality of outlook and general behaviour that characterizes all group life.

I have, therefore, no "bitterness" towards "Germany" for, save as a geographical and political fact, there is no such entity. There are seventy millions of people living in an area called Germany: there are certain features common to most of them, they have many ideas and ideals in common, but apart from this there are differences in opinion, in taste, in the expression of ethical qualities, etc. On examination I can no more find myself hating or loving a nation than I can find myself loving or hating a hundred thousand of my own countrymen. In each case there are huge bodies of people who in a given situation will react in an almost identical manner. I can, however, hate and be bitter towards a great many things that many Germans are doing, and in looking round for the cause of their doing these things I have no need to fall back

upon the modern and unscientific theory of race, a theory that is now rejected by nearly all scientific thinkers. If English babies were taken to Germany, or German babies brought to England, there is not the slightest doubt but that they would grow up indistinguishable from the average German or Englishman.

I think if we wish to form a scientific and serviceable idea of social evolution we must get rid of this phantom of "race" as we must get rid of the permanence of caste or class. Both exist, but both are to be dealt with as cultural products which will alter or disappear with the development of humanity.

CHAPMAN COHEN

## Bonnie Bobby Burns

Poor splendid wings so frayed and soiled and torn!  
 Poor kind wild eyes so dashed with light quick tears!  
 Poor perfect voice, most blithe when most forlorn,  
 That rings athwart the sea whence no man steers  
 Like joy-bells crossed with death-bells in our ears.

Steinburne

ROBERT BURNS has been dead for nearly a century and a half, and his fame is far wider and more secure than when he died. His life is now celebrated as an important event, and his poetry is rightly regarded as a notable contribution to the world's literature. Admittedly Scotland's greatest poet, he has been lied about and subjected to nauseous adulation from his narrow-minded countrymen. Had he been a lesser genius than he was, this legend-making and fulsome praise would have exposed his name to derision.

The real Burns is not the popular and legendary poet of the Scottish manse and drawing-room. When the peasant-poet was received by the orthodox and conventional aristocracy of Edinburgh he was being patronized, and he knew it. The company that professed to admire him stood and drank the great poet's health, and Burns raised his glass and bowed his acknowledgments. But they belonged to two different nations, the rich and the poor. Francois Villon could not have been more remote from that snobbish crowd than was Robert Burns. In spite of all the glib phrase-making of the critics, Burns belonged to a very different world from that which his patrons inhabited. The insuperable barriers between Burns the rare and rebellious genius, and his stupid, if well-meaning, patrons, are not got rid of by calmly pretending that they do not exist.

Burns was not only a rebel in politics, he was also a rebel in matter of religion. His heresies were "four square to all the winds that blow." That genial critic, Oliver Wendell Holmes, indeed, expressed surprise that puritanical and Calvinistic Scotland could take Bobbie Burns to her straight-laced bosom without breaking her stays. For Burns, like Paine and Voltaire, was a Deist. Of other religion save what flowed from a mild Theism he scarcely showed a trace. In truth, one can scarcely call it a creed at all. It was mainly a name for a particular mood of sentimentalism, the expression of a state of indefinite aspiration. The Holy Willies of Scottish Orthodoxy have made the basest uses of this emotionalism, but Christians cannot read Burns with attention without unloosening the shackles of their faith. David Hume's young Freethinking contemporary did not merely express his dissent from Presbyterianism. He struck at the heart of the Christian superstition. Seeing plainly that priests trade on fear, he sounded a true note when he said scornfully:—

The fear o' hell's a hangman's whip  
 To laud the wretch in order.

How he lashes the rigidly righteous!

Sae pious and sae holy,  
 Ye've nought to do but mark and tell  
 Your naeboo's fauts and folly. . . .

And again:—

Learn three-mile prayers, and half-mile graces,  
 Wi' well-spread looves, and lang, wry faces,  
 Grunt up a solemn, lengthened groan,  
 And damn all parties but your own,  
 I'll warrant then ye'er nae deceiver,  
 A steady, sturdy, staunch believer.

Burns never hesitated to make a frontal attack on religion:—

D'yruple mild, D'yruple mild, tho' your heart's like a child,  
 And your life like the new driven snow,  
 Yet that winna save ye, auld Satan must have ye  
 For preaching that three's ane an' twa. . .

Even the idea of deity excites his criticism:—

O Thou wha in the heavens dost dwell  
 Wha, as it pleases best Thyself  
 Sends ane to heaven and ten to hell,  
 A' for thy glory,  
 And no for any guid or ill  
 They've done afore Thee.

Like all pioneers, Robert Burns was much alone and ploughed a lonely furrow. So early was he in the field that he could do little more than anticipate Carlyle's bitter "Exodus from Houndsditch," or his caustic apostrophe to Christ, "Ih man, ye've had your day!" But what he did was sufficient for his generation. He fought at tremendous odds, and risked imprisonment, and as Carlyle says, "Granted the ship comes into harbour with shrouds and tackle damaged, the pilot is blameworthy, but to know how blameworthy, tell us first whether his voyage has been round the globe, or only to Ramsgate and the Isle of Dogs."

The noblest quality in Burns's magnificent poetry is the eternal quality of honest indignation. It comes always with no veil of invention; it is blunt, simple as daily speech, the man himself talking before us. It is this quality that makes his "Jolly Beggars," a poem which stands alone in literature, not only unmatched, but unmatchable. The beggars are not merely rebels; for them the laws and conventions of society have no existence. And so it was with Robert Burns himself. He rises above the network of clerical authorities like a skylark.

Orthodox critics have deliberately shut their eyes to all this. And fervent Scottish admirers have also tried to monopolize their Burns and protest too much that he was a dialect singer rather than a British poet. Both these bodies of enthusiasts fail to recognize that they were dealing with a real and unmistakable genius, and not a provincial poetaster. Burns's genius alone transforms him from a purely local singer to a great poet who makes his appeal to the English-speaking world and not to Caledonia alone. This is a direct challenge to those critics who declare that Burns depends upon dialect, and that when he tried to write English he fell into mediocrity, fettered by the difficulties of an alien tongue.

Indeed, this hoary contention is part only of the truth, and shows that Burns, like many another classic writer, is far more talked of than read. One of two quotations, taken at random from his works, will modify this idea effectively. Take, for example, the following lines from a love song:—

O my luv's like a red red rose  
 That's newly sprung in June!  
 O my luv's like the melody  
 That's sweetly played in tune.

Here is another from a battle-hymn, one of the best ever written :—

By Oppression's woes and pains,  
By your sons in servile chains,  
We will drain our dearest veins,  
But they shall be free.  
Lay the proud usurper low!  
Tyrants fall in every foe!  
Liberty's in every blow!  
Let us do or die!

How much do these two striking quotations depend on dialect? Or does this? :—

A fig for those by law protected,  
Liberty's a glorious feast.  
Courts for cowards were erected,  
Churches built to please the priest. . . .

Then turn to these lines which are admitted to be among the very finest than even Burns ever wrote :—

Had we never lov'd sae kindly,  
Had we never lov'd sae blindly,  
Never met—or never parted,  
We had ne'er been broken-hearted.

Do those superb lines derive their force and their magic from their one solitary word of Scots dialect? Burns has suffered grievously at the hands of hiccoughing Highlanders and Maudlin Free Kirk ministers, but professed literary critics might well give the corpse of defunct heresies decent burial. In no sense was Robert Burns a goody-goody and namby-pamby man. In the core and reality of his rare personality he was a rebel. One cannot help wondering whether that simple fact will ever be widely recognized by his own countrymen.

MIMNERMUS

## The Dawning Days of the English Reformation

AN instructive and interesting survey of the religious and social conditions of English life in the period preceding the Reformation has recently been published. This work is entitled *Pre-Reformation England* (Macmillan, 1938, 25s.), and is the outcome of a very extensive study and critical examination of the multitudinous writings relating to this theme. As its author, Canon Maynard Smith, intimates, he has not undertaken any original research, but has read "a multitude of books—good, bad and indifferent," which deal with the subject he discusses. The Canon concludes that the causes of the Reformation were deep seated; that no one theory, whether it be economic, social or religious will account for the transformation, and that until we became cognisant of the cross-currents of the preceding era no real understanding of the upheaval is likely to emerge.

The work under review is obviously that of a highly cultured cleric who, although himself an Anglican divine, nevertheless still retains considerable regard for the Roman Catholic cult. Still, his sacerdotal prepossessions are not very pronounced, and he has evidently striven to restrain them. In his own words: "While emphasizing all that is good in his period, he has not willingly suppressed the evidence for much that is bad, although he has put the best construction possible upon it, because he believes that by so doing he is more likely to approximate to the truth."

The defeat of Richard III. on Bosworth's field and the accession of Henry VII. to the throne, inaugurated the modern English State. Public opinion had become utterly repugnant to any return to the misery, turbulence and bloodshed of the Wars of the Roses. Under the first Tudor ruler the authority of the Crown

was steadily strengthened, and by his son and successor, Henry VIII., the complete supremacy of the Crown was established which practically continued to the death of Elizabeth.

In the time of Henry VII., the Church appeared an impregnable rock. When Henry died, clerical privileges and immunities were almost universally unquestioned. The leading statesmen were Cardinals and Bishops, while the Civil Service was extensively staffed by the clergy. As Dr. Smith observes: "The Church was enormously wealthy; it owned at least a fifth part of the land of England; its buildings were treasure houses, and every art was the handmaid of religion. Its services were necessary on all important occasions of life—at christenings, marriages and funerals. Its Courts alone decided all matrimonial cases, and ratified or did not ratify all wills. Its Courts, too, took cognisance of all transgressions of the moral law—the fornicator and the village scold might alike be summoned for punishment. The clergy almost entirely controlled education and hospitals, besides administering all charitable funds." Even the merchant guilds and crafts had their chapels and ministers. Priests were seen on every hand, and places of worship were the scene of every social activity, while church bells were perpetually summoning the laity to prayer. Holidays, miracle-plays and moralities were all under clerical control and, indeed, the Church seemed to dominate every department of civil and religious life. Yet when challenged by the secular Power, the Church collapsed almost at a blow. Why she submitted so patiently to her pitiful humiliation is the problem the Canon seeks to solve.

Peter's Pence and other Papal encroachments and exactions had long been unpopular, and the swarm of foreign prelates fattening on highly salaried sinecures in the Church, which included many scandalous pluralities, aroused great resentment. Secular sovereigns were growing indifferent to Papal entreaties and, although Turkish cavalry were plundering Hungarian territory, and Moslem corsairs were pillaging the Adriatic Ports, the Pope's appeal for a Crusade against the truculent infidel made little impression on princes, even if the Moslem depredations led to a considerable flow of money into the Papal exchequer. Secular considerations were now in the ascendant, and these decided the contest between the spiritual and temporal powers. As the Canon cogently concludes: "The Papacy had for the time ceased to be religious, and no well-informed man trusted the Pope, while the scandals of the Roman Court were a byword. . . . Only a few foresaw the consequences which would follow the disruption, or anticipated the wars, revolutions, spoliations and persecutions which would ensue. No one probably at the beginning of the sixteenth century held that religious faith in the See of Peter which characterizes Roman Catholics to-day. Even Sir Thomas More felt it his duty to warn his master against too great a subservience to the Pope."

As already intimated, favourites of the Church and Crown received rich benefices which they seldom or never visited. Reginald Pole, the later Cardinal, was amply provided for when a boy of 13, while, when only 18, a Deanery at Wimborne and two Prebends were conferred upon him. Cardinal Wolsey's natural son was made Dean of Wells when he was a schoolboy, and twelve other lucrative preferments were heaped upon him, while, when he approached manhood more sinecures became his. As Professor Pollard shows in his *Wolsey*, the illegitimate boy's income totalled £54,000 in present money value. "It is true," comments Canon Smith, "that his prudent father received and retained this income, and only allowed him £200 a year to live on, or £4,000 of our money."

The magnitude of the clerical army in England in

pre-Reformation centuries is simply amazing. As early as 1381—and a century later its number had certainly not decreased—20,161 were enumerated under the Poll Tax returns, and this very high figure, in proportion to the smallness of the general population, does not embrace the friars, who were also very numerous. Capes is cited as saying that "one in fifty-two Englishmen above fourteen years of age was a cleric." The city of York must have been a veritable rabbit warren of the clericals for with a population of 10,800 there existed 41 parish churches and 500 clergy. Certainly, many were in minor orders and followed secular avocations, and it is suggested that these nondescript clerks "had received the tonsure in order to obtain benefit of clergy without any intention of proceeding to the priesthood."

While the community accepted their ministrations, which were deemed essential to salvation, the laity objected to the financial burdens imposed by the clergy. Tithes, glebes, fees and offerings caused discontent, while the prying of consistory courts into people's private affairs also contributed to the unpopularity of the priesthood. Yet, all these evils persisted after Roman supremacy was discarded.

Under the Canon Law in operation from Norman days onwards, it was decreed that: "A clerk is not to be brought before the public courts either in a civil or criminal case." This rule was usually observed, but criminous clerks were occasionally tried in the King's Courts and even immured by the Crown officials. Clerks convicted on criminal charges by the ecclesiastical courts were mostly ordered into confinement. But this procedure was usually farcical, as so many facilities were afforded for escape from prison.

As literacy became more general many aggrieved subjects complained of the "justice" administered in the clerical courts. As Maynard Smith states: "A clerk came to be synonymous with one who could read at any rate his 'Neck Verse,' i.e., the first verse of the 51st Psalm. As a matter of course all schoolboys were tonsured and able to plead their clergy; but what was to be done for schoolgirls, who could read, but were debarred by sex from claiming the same privilege? To remedy this injustice an Act was passed in the reign of Henry IV. whereby no woman was to suffer death for matters wherein a man might plead his clergy, while a blind man was to escape the halter if he could speak Latin 'congruously.'" Save in cases of high treason, there were seemingly no exceptions to benefit of clergy in the period of Edward III., while under the Yorkist Edward IV., the clergy were not only legally safeguarded from arrest on criminal charges but no action might be taken against them in the secular courts.

Although denounced by Perkin Warbeck as a shameful violation of the rights of Holy Church, it was provided by an Act of Henry VII., that criminal clerics should be branded on the right hand, but this stigma applied to minor orders only. It is noteworthy that in the Act's preamble, murder, robbery, rape and other heinous crimes are specified as offences constantly committed by those who had enjoyed benefit of clergy. Under Henry VIII., there were further reforms and the curtailment of clerical immunities increased with the Protestant advance, although this clerical privilege did not completely disappear until the reign of George IV., when it was swept away by Parliament in 1827.

The right to sanctuary in sacred places was another feature of earlier times. Indebtedness, crime and misdemeanour caused men to seek sanctuary in order to avoid arrest. The clergy adopted an aggressive attitude towards those officers of the Crown who violated their sanctuaries despite the glaring scandal most of them had become. In ruder times these

havens may have sheltered innocent men fleeing from despotism and persecution. Innumerable sanctuaries existed in England and it is stated that those at Beverley, Ripon and Hexham "extended a mile in all directions from the churches."

In many instances, the sanctuaries were the resort of nefarious characters. Spendthrifts thus defrauded their creditors, and thieves ran to them with their stolen property and plotted further depredations within them. Under cover of nightfall they plundered and maltreated inoffensive citizens, and even murdered their victims. Under Henry VII., sanctuary-dwellers who wandered in the night to commit crime were to forfeit all future right to asylum. His successor, Henry VIII. proceeded further and felons and homicides who entered into sanctuary became liable to branding on the thumb and were compelled to abjure the realm.

When the monasteries were dissolved most sanctuaries disappeared, while the immunities retained by those that remained were curtailed. Yet, the malevolent Cave of Adullam at Whitefriars in London, subsequently known as Alsatia, lingered until 1697.

Two other London sanctuaries were those of Westminster and St. Martin-le-Grand. These refuges, however, were utilized by the unfortunate as well as by the criminal sections of society. But the doom of the sanctuaries was sealed with the widened powers of the civil authorities and, although they had once possessed their romantic, and perhaps penitential, aspects, their extinction is in no way to be deplored.

T. F. PALMER

### "What About Alf?"

SINCE Jesus Christ spoke the parable of the Good Samaritan there has been no such truly Christian piece of Literature as *What are you going to do about Alf?* by Henry Miller that idol of the English and American intellectuals. It is the most Christian piece of unchristianity that I have read for a long time. And it is also an unusually important piece of Freethought.

Issued anonymously in Paris—"no bigger than a man's hand," like the celebrated cloud—with an innocent dove-grey cover and a sub-title "An Open Letter to All and Sundry"; and consisting of only 19 pages, this opuscle contains literary dynamite instead of the usual literary dope. As the issue was a strictly limited one, copies of the work are virtually unobtainable except by bibliophiles with long purses.

Perhaps in these circumstances I should explain why I am so fortunate as to have a copy. That unique London bookseller, Charles Labr, who has long been a friend to every struggling young writer in London lent me a copy with the observation that it was worth £10. In reality, of course, the price of the book, like the price of the virtuous woman in Ecclesiastes, is "far above rubies," and assuming those rubies to be of any size and of the true pigeon-blood colour, the price should be many tens of pounds. But Charles is the only bookseller in London congenitally incapable of overcharging even 10d. for a book. Therefore I was suitably impressed at his valuation of Miller's miniature masterpiece.

Few people in England have read anything of Henry Miller. Such shattering works as *Tropic of Cancer*, *Tropic of Capricorn*, *Black Spring*, and the rest are not even names to the majority of English readers, and no English bookseller dare stock them. Yet such famous English critics as Cyril Connolly, the Editor of *Horizon*, Herbert Read, Editor of the *Burlington Magazine*, and such creative writers as T. S. Eliot,

Aldous Huxley and Ezra Pound have borne glowing tribute to their quality; and so have various literary reviews and critics of standing in America. One critic described one book as follows: "At last an unprintable book fit to read."

If you ask me what Miller's books are about I should say (from such of them as I have read), that they are about Life, real life as lived in the underworld of Paris and not life falsified, sentimentalized, painted, photographed or served up as literary-confection. Zola at his most brutal and realistic, is a schoolgirl's box of chocolates compared with the American Miller in some of his passages about sex. His vocabulary is suited to its subjects. Naturally Miller's books cannot be obtained in England—and it would be difficult to defend their author or publisher in any London police-court.

But this little booklet is pure applied Christianity. It is the Good Samaritan in modern dress. "Alf" is a literary genius, Alfred Perlès, author of *Sentiments Limitrophes* who needs to be kept alive and idle until he has finished his next book—*Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur*. He has "fallen among thieves"—inasmuch as he has rotted in the Paris underworld living like a cockroach for 12 years. What is to be done? Miller suggests shipping him to Ibiza, where one can live on 300 francs a month, *tout compris*, and where he will be safe for no one will think of bombing Ibiza because that wouldn't pay. Ibiza, you perceive is the modern equivalent of Christ's "Inn" between Jerusalem and Jericho.

Note that Miller's friend Alf is not put forward as a "deserving" case. Of that I very strongly approve, as Hamlet did when he bade Polonius treat the "players" after his own merit and not theirs. Alf is merely one genius in a world full of starving genius. He may have excellent morals, bad morals or none at all—to Miller, as to Christ who consorted with harlots, this is irrelevant. Alf's need and the world's need that his need shall be satisfied—these are the things that matter. Alf shall live *en prince* in Ibiza for three to six months that he may complete his new book.

In that time Alf ought to complete the novel which he has begun. That is if he's the genius I take him to be! If he's not, then to hell with him! Let him rot in Ibiza! God giveth and God taketh away as the Israelites say.

A trifle hard and blasphemous, but we can forgive a callous on the foot making speed to help. What one cannot forgive is the well-shod and delicately-mincing foot of the priest or of the Levite that always "passes by on the other side"? Nor does Miller urge that something should be done for Alf merely on account of his genius. "Neither Alf nor I have ever demanded that a man be a genius before shelling out for him. We give right and left *when we have it*."

But that a man should shell out and give right and left when he has it, is too hard doctrine for most of us. It is so Christ-like that it would destroy this Christian civilized world as we know it utterly if Christians put it into practice. It is much safer for Christians to say that "unfortunately" Miller disfigures his writing by the use of disgusting vernacular words, and that much of what he writes is "unwholesome" or "unnecessary" or "somewhat unsuitable for family reading" or (becoming direct at last) that he is obscene, as indeed he, infrequently is.

Miller, (thank God for him!) puts really unimportant things like Fascism, Communism, Social Credit and the New Economic Order in their proper places just as Christ did with Caesarism over the penny tribute-money:—

Alf knows nothing about Social Credit and neither

do I. If Social Credit will take care of Alf then I'm for it! If Fascism will take care of Alf then I'm for Fascism! If Communism, then let it be Communism. We espouse any and all platforms, theories, doctrines, cults, isms, that will bring immediate relief. If Adolf or Benito should ever read this I trust they will give heed. He don't care what the set-up is so long as it doesn't interfere with *Le Quatuor en Ré Majeur*.

And exactly so should say all of us! What the "set-up" or Government is doesn't matter if only we can be let alone! But alas! we are all Government-slaves (whatever nationality we are) and there is no real freedom anywhere. Freethinkers are not allowed in any Occidental land to be free expressionists. Even the *Freethinker*, the most courageous paper in Britain, would not print some of Miller's language; and fortunately I need not ask it to do so. But what a world of children a world is, which is afraid of words, mere words!

From the ordinary world of lunatic-politicians, dictators, totalitarian and democratic, war-mongers and their multitudinous dupes Henry Miller is completely detached. That is what makes him so refreshing. I especially commend the following passage to consideration:—

There are lots of people in this world who don't believe in charity any more. They want to overthrow the Government, set up a new economic order, establish higher ideals, etc., etc. I don't believe in this crap. *I believe in nothing except what is active, immediate and personal.* The reason for this is because I am practical and realistic. For guys like Hitler, Roosevelt and Mussolini it's all right to talk about "the new order": they're in the gravy and there's nothing to lose by it. But guys like us are at the bottom. We have to eat every day and smoke and what not. Five Year Plans don't interest us. Tomorrow doesn't interest us. It's to-day that counts *and only to-day!* Do you follow me?

Exactly like Christ again! All for the "active, immediate and personal," and taking no thought for the morrow. Either Christ was very like Miller in mind or the inventor of Christ was. Whether Miller will be complimented by this comparison I do not know; pseudo-Christians who dip into Miller will be horrified no doubt. But it is all so obvious and striking that it shrieks for utterance. And is it not refreshing to have Roosevelt bracketed with Hitler and Mussolini—Miller is an American, and I suppose British politicians barely exist in his American outlook—instead of in eternal ridiculous antithesis as Good Angel and Bad Devils respectively according to whether you were born (quite accidentally) in Germany or America.

Of course, Miller, like Christ, points the moral to adorn the tale. Both cry: This means *You!* Cheques for the needy Alf are to be sent to Miller at a Paris address, and you are to buy *Sentiments Limitrophes*. I suppress the address because Henry Miller (for all I know) may have left Paris and be in London, New York, Ibiza or even Christ's Palestine by now. One can only hope that such eminent folk as Duhamel, André Gide, Jean Cocteau, Céline, Aldous Huxley, T. S. Eliot and Ezra Pound responded to this appeal when it was sent to them.

Here is one part of Miller's gospel:—

We differ from the rank and file of our contemporaries. Things are so bad we say that it is useless to pretend any more. Get what you can by hook or crook! Lie, beg, steal, wheedle, cajole, threaten, calumniate, whimper, wail, dance, scream, stand on your head—*anything, but don't surrender!* We don't care what you think of our conduct. We have only one concern to finish the *Quatuors* which are in us. . . .

It would be a better and an honester world if we could all live up to that! All hells, here and hereafter, are the result of compromise over the one essential thing, whatever that be.

I cannot forbear adding that it was Alf "who really wrote the introduction to *A Rebours*, a masterpiece which has long been credited to Theophile Gautier. Alf was then a baby in Vienna." Also Alf "will never earn his bread by the sweat of his brow. He neither toils nor spins. God gives him not only the first line as with Paul Valery, but every line."

Finally let me remind Freethinkers that Miller's question, "What about Alf?" goes down to the very roots of all our daily conduct. There is an Alf living next door, perhaps in our very homes, perhaps in our very bones. For Alf is a symbol as well as a reality—a symbol of the one essential thing, "And what are we going to do about Alf?"

C. G. L. DU CANN

[There is an article by Miller in the July number of the English review *Horizon*, entitled "Reflections on Writing," and one by Alfred Perlès, entitled "I Live on my Wits."]

#### INGERSOLLIANA

One of the "younger generation" of the family of Ingersoll finds employment still as his literary executor, more than forty years after the death of that great man. This is Mrs. Sue M. Farrell of Rye, N.Y., who was editor, as her husband C. P. Farrell was publisher, of the standard Dresden edition of Ingersoll's works; a protracted service, for it was Mrs. Farrell who provided E. M. MacDonald with letters and newspaper clippings in his book *Ingersoll As He Is* (1896) some of the material dating as early as 1877. In a letter under date of March 31, 1940, the lady writes: "I am having a lovely time these days finishing the *Ingersoll Scrap Books for the Congressional Library*. What a wonderful press he had! One month fills over 150 pages."

Into the envelope with her letter Mrs. Farrell drops a clipping on "Tolerance," from the "On the side" department contributed to the San Francisco Examiner of March 13, 1940, by E. V. Durling as follows:—

Wasn't it Robert Ingersoll who said, "The most lovable quality any human being can possess is tolerance. It is the vision that enables one to see things from another's viewpoint. It is the generosity that concedes to others the right to their own opinion and peculiarities. It is the bigness that enables us to let people be happy in their own way instead of our way."

The date of the item proves that the collector of Ingersolliana for the Congressional Library is keeping up with the press. This one is forwarded for me to judge as an observer since 1875 of what Ingersoll "began both to do and teach," whether the quotation is genuine or apocryphal. Well, the Right Hon. William Ewart Gladstone said Ingersoll wrote "with a rare and enviable brilliancy," and Mr. Beecher that he was "the most brilliant speaker of the English language of all men on this globe"; and, believing them both, I cannot believe that Ingersoll said it that way. The composition is not good enough for Ingersoll. I could write it myself.

"The newspaper clippings," writes Mrs. Farrell, "show a revival of the old stories about the Colonel—the watch story, the Gen. Lew Wallace story, et al." With the Scrap Book and its truth of history making the facts accessible, there will be greater moral risk in repeating these stories; although, as the Colonel made mention when speaking of Paine myths at New Rochelle in 1894, there are few things that rate such high expectancy of life as a good healthy religious lie.

From the New York "Truthseeker"

#### Acid Drops

A sense of social decency would have induced anyone but very religious folk, or, to be more definite, Christian folk, to restrain illicit forms of propaganda during the period of the war. But where strong Christian conviction—of the orthodox kind—exists, decency generally takes a back place. Since the war began we have given numerous examples of this, and last week we paid special attention to the disgraceful picture of a Cabinet Minister using his position as an instrument for the advertising of his religious convictions. Of course, where a direct reply would have been possible, he would not have had the courage to say what he did. But the B.B.C. provides a safe platform for him to exhibit both his folly and lack of a sense of responsibility. We still hope to hear something of this in Parliament.

But here is another example to hand. And this concerns the London County Council. A large leaflet before us is issued by the "members of the L.C.C. Valuation Staff, Estates and Housing Department, County Hall, to Tenants of the Council's Housing Estates." The recipients are asked to pin the circular up in their home. The circular consists of six paragraphs. The first three are concerned with appeals of a very wishy-washy moral import that are well calculated to incite men and women of strong character to deliberately break each one of them. The last three are concerned with God. Number one advises that steadiness and inner strength come from God, and that the tenants should write down the thoughts God gives them. (Judging from the nature of most thoughts that come in that way, one suspects that God must be interested in the maintenance of psychopathic institutions). God can be heard everywhere, even in an air-raid shelter. (We fancy there is something in this, because at the news of a disaster one hears the exclamation "Good God!")

Number two advises tenants to "listen to God the first thing every morning." But "first thing" is a very vague guide as to time. The useful direction would be "listen-in to God from 7.30 to 8.30," or "office hours from 7 till 8." The directions given are too vague. Number three is concerned with "a British General who fought through two wars." He gives the information that "no bombardment can stop messages from God coming through." How to recognize them, is, we suspect, the difficulty. Without guidance one may easily mistake a singing in the ears due to that "morning after" feeling for a divine message. And, quite honestly and seriously, if one wished to get these messages, a visit to the nearest lunatic asylum would provide many such from assured supernatural sources.

Now what we wish to know is how far the L.C.C. is a party to this kind of stupid religious propaganda? The pamphlets are distributed from the L.C.C. Estate Office. The particular one before us was, we are informed, distributed on the South East London Estates. We should like to hear from some of the people on that estate, and we are willing to provide a supply of Freethought literature for anyone who will undertake its distribution by way of corrective.

Since writing the above we have received a copy of the same rubbishy circular distributed in the name of the Mayors of Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole, and the Sheriff of Poole. Each of whom has abused his office to the extent of using it as a means of advertising his own religious opinions. It is useless appealing to the sense of honour of these men. Obviously they can see nothing wrong in being elected to a public office for one purpose, and then using it in the interests of another and a different one. Where religion is concerned their sense of honour is as twisted as is that of Lord Halifax. The only reply to such conduct is for Freethinkers to bring their opinions more energetically before the public than they have done. Again we say we shall be pleased to do all we can to help this campaign. We suggest that letters to

the public press may do some good. The circulation of our literature would do even greater good. The policy of "appeasement" is as certain to lead to evil results in internal affairs as it has done in our international affairs. When Freethinkers make it plain that they will not put up quietly with such abuses of civic offices, bigots who occupy these offices will behave with greater decency.

At the time of writing the tax on books has not become law, and we hope it never will. A tax on books is a tax on knowledge and an obstacle to the cultivation of ideas by the best method of all—that of contrast. At the best it will mean fewer books, at its worst the reading of less concerning "other side," and with our stupid Ministry of Information enough harm has already been done in that last direction. But the most monstrous suggestion of all that is that the Bible should remain untaxed. Up to the present Sir Kingsley Wood has turned down the suggestion, but there are enough people in high places to reverse that decision. We should object to the Bible being taxed alone, and for that reason we object to its being untaxed while others are penalized. There are surely enough Bibles in circulation for the further printing to be voluntarily suspended.

The other day, at Kingston-on-Thames, there was a great religious pow-wow on the war. As the parsons did the talking there was a very strong expression of opinion that Britain's greatest enemy was religious unbelief. In plain language, that meant a unanimous vote, from the clergy, that the right way to win the war is "Pay more attention to us." We do not blame the clergy overmuch for this because we have the same thing in the political world and elsewhere. We may take it as, at its best, an example of mere egotism, and often financial or socially inspired egotism. But quite seriously we suggest that the clergy should set an example of honesty of expression—and damn the Ministry of Information—by sermonizing on the plainly worded subject "The Nation's Need of Us." Then even the duller heads in the community might take notice.

The curate of St. Paul's Church, Kingston-on-Thames, has been obliged to resign owing to his pacific views. The poor man appears to have taken quite seriously the advice of Jesus Christ to turn one cheek when the other is smitten. He also said, again seriously, in the course of a sermon that God loves everybody, even Hitler. And under our own Defence regulations that is not permissible. The curate appears to have been taking God and Jesus, and the professions of the religious among his parishioners too seriously.

The President of the Methodist Conference, Dr. Henry Bett, says that ministers of religion who neglect the sick and the dying ought to be drummed out. From the professional Christian's point of view we regard this as sound teaching. The sick, in mind, and the dying have, historically, been the raw material of which Christians have been formed. Christian doctrines appealed to the sick mind, and the fear of what might happen to them after death has unquestionably frightened the majority of those who have been announced as converts to the Christian faith. Take away from the Christian religion the element of fear and its greatest appeal has gone.

While we are on this subject of "fear," we may note a letter which appeared in the *Daily Telegraph* from Lady Asquith protesting against the exciting of fear by many of our official leaders. We recognize this contribution the more readily because we were perhaps the only paper at the time that protested against, to use our own phrase, the propaganda of fear that was carried on during the "Munich" period. We repeat now what we said then, that there is nothing that will make a people more docile, and less critical, than fear. Either that or it drives them to unconsidered revolt. We must protest against the British public receiving the constant encouragement to fear, and not to criticize the Government and to treat each of their neighbours as a possible or probable mem-

ber of the "fifth column." We can quite appreciate the value of fear to our religious leaders and to some of our political ones. But we are not interested in promoting the power of either group. A determined free people must be both an intelligent and a fear-free one.

Many times we have cited Frazer's statement that our civilization is a veneer on primitive savage thought. What we have said above proves the truth of the statement to the hilt. And here are other examples of the crudest of superstitions, upon the maintenance of which the Roman Catholic Church places such dependence—financial and other. Before us is a pamphlet issued by the Catholic Truth Society dealing with answers to prayers offered to the Blessed Thomas More and the Blessed John Fisher. The pamphlet contains a number of answers to these two "Blessed" saints. Here are a few of them. A solicitor in answer to his requests for clients found his business increase. Another purchased, or subscribed, a "Novena" to get a better post, and got it. Another, after continuously praying to both the saints, converted an Anglican. He must have been a rather tough proposition. Another received many helps, but in a legal case St. Thomas failed him. Very charitably, the petitioner concluded that the saint "had no further interest in the law." Another was aided in getting a legal victory which brought him £2,000. One other sold his property to great advantage. Most remarkable of all, the influence of the two saints persuaded a newspaper to offer a public apology. We consider that the latter two were hitting "below the belt."

One would like to know exactly what was the "rake-off" received in these cases. The genuinely religious figure would be ten per cent, but probably the larger sums meant more. The one certain thing is that, if this kind of "racket" was worked outside religion, there would be many prosecutions.

The *Burnley Express* has discovered that Thomas Paine's writings made him "the most unpopular man in England." That is true enough, but it is also one of those truths which suggest a falsity. Paine's writings made him one of the most popular men in England, and also in America. And there was hardly another of whom the Government of the day stood in greater fear than they did of Paine. Men who do the real work of the world are usually well loved and well hated. And very, very often the measure of their value is to be found in the intensity of the hatred they inspire. Paine was one of the most loved, the most hated, and the most feared of his time. And his writings are doing for numbers to-day what they did nearly a century and a half ago.

A new religious cult, probably inspired by the success of Mrs. Eddy and other lady evangelists has got into trouble with the U.S.A. police. A Mrs. Edna Ballard, known to her followers as Sweet Saint Joan, is charged with defrauding over a million U.S.A. citizens by promising them they would never die. Postal orders rained in, and now Mrs. Ballard has been arrested in Los Angeles accused of fraud.

We are not shocked at this form of swindling. Swindling is so rife in one or another form that there is no ground for surprise when a new operator appears upon the scene. But why run the risk of imprisonment? Why not found a Church, say on the lines of existing Churches, which will enable people to feel sure of their immortality, and, as with the Roman Catholic Church, where they may make sure of both solid cash and help, while on earth, and comfortable positions in heaven? People who run the risk of imprisonment for working a religious "racket" are just fools. Mrs. Eddy pulled in huge sums by assuring people that all sickness was a delusion, and large numbers of her followers received a shock when she died just as certainly as the most pronounced Atheist. Those who would get position and cash easily, should study the history of the Churches. If they cannot get adequate inspiration from that study they must indeed be dull dogs.

**To get a New Subscriber is to make a New Friend**

# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

"TAB CAN."—Thanks for cutting. Items of news are always welcome, either for immediate notice or to put by for reference. We are very much indebted to those who help in this way to keep us in touch with current events.

W. H. BLORE.—We are very pleased to hear from a newcomer to the *Freethinker*. We trust that your appreciation will not decline with a longer acquaintance. It seldom does. We keep our friends, once we make them. Sorry that the length of your letter prohibits publication. But we shall hope to hear from you in the future.

J. F. DAVIS writes that once when his son was called up for service he asked his father what he thought he ought to do when asked his religion. The reply was "stand for your principle." Mr. Davis says that on his first visit home his son showed him, with pride, "Atheist" on his identity disc.

A. F. STEVENS.—There is often considerable interest attaching to the reproduction of past pictures of scenes that now belong strictly to the past. Will appear shortly.

"FAIR-PLAY."—Your *nom de plume* would be appropriate if your letter was nearer the truth. The Roman Catholic Church, being itself a totalitarian system has never condemned that form of Government, as such. It did not condemn Fascism in Abyssinia, or in the joint attack of the two Fascist countries on the Spanish Republic. All it has ever condemned has been action which tended to rob the Roman Church of cash or power. Covering this kind of policy with a cloak of morality is a very old Christian trick.

J. T. BRIGHTON.—Sorry your note did not reach us in time for last issue of the *Freethinker*. We are pleased to learn that your debate was successful, and hope you will have a good time in Wigan. Send us a note.

R. F. HILL.—Obliged for good wishes. Yes, the times, as you say, are hard and trying, but we hope to pull through all right, in spite of new difficulties that may arise.

S. R. GAINES (Boston, Mass.)—Mr. Cohen has written.

J. HUMPHRIES.—Pleased to have your appreciation of *Almost an Autobiography*. It is selling well, and winning golden opinions. We may presently publish a selection from letters, etc., received. But we would much prefer a sharp criticism of the book.

R. D. MORRIS.—The impertinence of these officials using their official position to advertise their religious opinions amounts to an outrage on decency. But when the highest officers in the State show no better sense of rectitude one need not be surprised at the example being followed by "small-town" officials. The British public has a deal to learn yet with regard to the meaning of true "freedom."

S. PORTER.—Will you be good enough to send us the date and name of the paper from which the report is taken.

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

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums

Mr. Joseph Lewis, of New York, writes that he will be willing to do what he can to assist parents who wish to send their children to the United States during the war. His address is 317 East 34th St., New York, U.S.A.

## SPECIAL

WITH a view to meeting circumstances that may arise with a prolongation of the war, we should be greatly helped if each subscriber to the *Freethinker* would be good enough to send us his, or her, name and address. We refer only to those who procure their copies through newsagents. Those who order direct from the office have their addresses already on our books.

The circumstances we have in view may never arise, but it is well to be prepared for all kinds of difficulties. We have, so well as we can, guarded the future of the paper in many directions, and this suggestion represents the last contingency of which we can think—at the moment.

All that is required is just a name and an address on a postcard or in a letter. We shall know to what it refers. Our readers have assisted us so willingly, and in so many directions, that we do not hesitate to ask this further help.

CHAPMAN COHEN

We take the following from a Derbyshire paper:—

Staggering out of a tent bleeding from a gunshot wound in the abdomen, Kenneth Jones, 19, an aircraftman in the R.A.F., stationed in Derbyshire, told a comrade that he had shot himself, as he wanted to die. He was removed to hospital, and died the following day, the bullet having passed through his left lung.

At the inquest at Derby, it was stated that he was generally of a moody and reserved disposition, was disappointed that he had not been placed in the flying section, and had declared that he was fed up with being in one place. He had been drafted six weeks ago from Manchester, where his parents lived at Heaton Park. As punishment for refusing to attend church parade he had been ordered 56 days' confinement to site.

A verdict that he committed suicide while the balance of his mind was disturbed was returned.

Technically a soldier may refuse to attend Church service, but he must parade for Church service, and can be compelled to march with his party to the Church door. In practice the compulsion to attend Church parade is unnecessary and should be abolished. In any case the punishment appears to be out of proportion to the offence. And we are fighting a war for freedom?

We have said more than once that we do not agree with the passing of a conscription measure in Parliament, and at the same time exempting a conscientious objector from military service. We have every respect for any man who stands up for what he believes to be right, but to pass a measure such as conscription, and then leave it for those to stand out who desire to do so, is, to put it mildly, not a logical way of doing things. To exempt the clergy as a body is understanding, for where religion and medicine-men are concerned we are still on a very primitive level. Mumbo-Jumbo is still enthroned, and the Archbishop who is in close touch with Mumbo-Jumbo, and the King who is a kind of incarnation of the local Mumbo-Jumbo, still lead the people in prayer.

First to make it legal that a man who has a conscientious objection against military service is not to be conscripted; and then straightway punishing him for asserting his legal rights is to act with complete dishonesty to a specified group of citizens, and makes the law a laughing stock. For this reason we are glad to find Mr. Bevin protesting against the action of local councils who are punishing conscientious objectors with discharge from their posts or inflicting other penalties. Parliament should say decisively that it will insist that the law shall be carried out in the spirit as well as in the letter. Independence of mind is not yet so common in our community that we can afford to penalize its expression.

On Sunday, August 18, the Birmingham Branch N.S.S. will visit Sutton Park. All members and friends wishing to join the party are asked to meet at the Town Gate entrance Sutton Coldfield at 3.30 p.m. With the present spell of fine weather the trip should be an enjoyable one.

## A Bachelor God

If we could only model our lives upon that of Jesus then everything in the garden would be lovely. Jesus was God as well as man; he was a *divine* intrusion. Human efforts by themselves are foredoomed to failure. We must always ask ourselves: What would Jesus do? The New Testament gives us the answers. We have but to do likewise and this world would be a Paradise. What we are going through today is simply due to the fact that we have refused to listen in the hardness of our hearts to the simple, saving words of Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus was then the Great Exemplar. There was no credit due to him, of course, for Jesus was God as well as Man, and Gods have special abilities. All the same it is possible for us to imitate him and in that imitation lies the secret of happy living and, particularly, happy dying. If we will not imitate, then we shall have wars and pestilences, but it is our own fault. It serves us right. We refuse to listen to the Nazarene.

The great Christian institution we are told at the same time is Marriage. Is it irrelevant to raise the question: What did Jesus do about Marriage? He could have married, but did not. Instead of pinning his faith to the letting loose of scores of inconsistent aphorisms, he might have introduced the Divine strain into poor sinful humanity by ordinary natural means. But, we are told, this is unthinkable. A God to act as an ordinary human being! Well, the methods of human reproduction were, according to religious teaching, designed by the All-Wise and the All-Good. They received his imprimatur. When he looked around and saw that all was Good, the method of bringing young into existence was one of the things that were pronounced Good. To refrain from speeding up the painfully slow rate of human progress by adding something God-like to the strain cannot be excused because those means were considered (particularly by the religious) as animal and disgusting. God had thought out this method and pronounced it satisfactory. It would have indeed sanctified marriage if Jesus had allowed his eyes to linger a little on the daughters of men. If he had chosen Penelope or Priscilla, managed a home and raised a family and added to his teachings his advice on the practical difficulties arising from married life, then it could at least have been urged that he had done something to dignify marriage and dignify woman. It would not have been beyond the power of omnipotence so to arrange his matrimonial experiences that almost every source of married discord could have been experienced by him and his mate—and solved. A Sermon on the Mount delivered by a married man (of parts) could have been infinitely useful. He could have taught us how to solve the difficulty when one of the partners wishes the windows to be open and the other wishes them to be closed. He could have told us how to go about it when the only cash balance available is four shillings and the needs enormous. He could have told us how to decide whether it should go for a pair of boots for little Tommie or a frock for little Emily, or a good Sunday's dinner.

That would have been a Great Exemplar worth having. But Jesus would have none of it. He was God and was wiser than us. He knew that domestic life did not matter a tinker's curse. He knew that the world was coming to an end in a very short time—even in the life-time of those who were listening to him. He knew that in a little while the sun would be darkened, the moon would not give forth its light and the stars of heaven would fall, and being somewhat of a logician he thought that the attempts of Jude and Jezebel to set up house together and scheme

as to how to get the wherewithal for the little babies that God would send in good time, were silly attempts. What mattered and mattered only was that Jude and Jezebel should bestir themselves and sprinkle themselves with water, and accept his Lordship, in order to belong to the *Elect*. Now that was a subject that did matter. Your eternal welfare! Heaven or Hell! Surely it was very very important where you would spend eternity. It was inexcusable in these circumstances to look upon the daughters of men even if they were fair. Take no thought for the morrow, ladies and gentleman! Live like the birds of the air or the lilies of the field. Your father who art in heaven will notice these things and reward you a hundred-fold. Good business! Much more than that, Excellent Business, Stupendous Business! More than twenty per cent returns; more than a hundred per cent; more than a thousand per cent!! Believe in me and be baptized and enjoy the Beatific Vision. Believe not, think that the stars may last a little longer, at least long enough to have a few happy weeks or months or years with Priscilla, and for you, my buck, an eternity of Misery. You will be reduced to a frizzle.

The early believers who looked into this message of Jesus saw that Jesus was no cracker-up of Marriage, the union of twin souls, the sacredness of the sex-relation, the holiness of the Home. They flocked into monasteries, into nunneries; they thought that God's scheme for replenishing the earth was an amateurish, rather disgusting, first thought. They thought that time had brought wisdom and that Jesus had come to give them the second-thought: "Save your soul and your body will take care of itself. The body is unclean. You can think of it only with grave risk to your eternal soul."

To-day ecclesiastics have had a third thought. They say that Christianity now really means the dignity of the Sex Relation; the Sacredness of Marriage; the Magnificence of the Family; the Holiness of the Home. Good stuff this Christianity! So adaptable, so well-fitted to the needs of the times; so strong to withstand all kinds of profane criticism. The same yesterday, to-day, and to-morrow. And yet so splendidly flexible. So lucid and yet so vague. So fair and yet so futile. There are the marks of our Civilization. Our Christian Civilization! For this civilization we call upon you, Christians, Trinitarians and Unitarians, Baptists, we call upon you to fight. And you, too, you Muhammadans, Buddhists, Zoroastrians, hurry with enthusiasm under our beautiful—if rather blood-stained—banner. And you, too, you Atheist, fill in your form. Let the welkin ring with your shouts for Christian Civilization. There's a worthy cause to die for. Spiritual Values! The Christian Marriage, the Christian Home, purely spiritual, of course, but with a little of the flesh thrown in, for the flesh is weak and *God is good*. And if we only fight for our Christian Civilization God will be very, very good. *We know!* For you there will be your Christian reward, your thousand per cent. Plenty of the Beatific Vision! So whatever your beliefs may be, for the duration at any rate, ONWARD CHRISTIAN SOLDIERS.

T. H. ELSTON

No man undertakes a trade he has not learned, even the meanest; yet every one thinks himself sufficiently qualified for the hardest of all trades—that of government.—*Socrates*.

## A Book Worth Reading

"The human mind has the amazing ability of being able to hold simultaneously two distinct and reconcilable beliefs. For instance, it is possible for a man to believe in the Old Testament Creation, and at the same time acknowledge the truth of the evolutionary rise of man.

"The conflict between two opposing views of mind comes only when the mind is forced to make a positive and open choice of one or the other." This quotation is taken from *Devils, Drugs and Doctors*, by Doctor Howard W. Haggard, and published by William Heinemann at 12s. 6d.

Doctor Haggard has made his positive choice—that of evolutionist. This book is a history of medicine from the very earliest ages up to the present time. It is written by a man who has no scruples in attacking shams of all sorts, and he rightly places the church amongst the greatest of these in the sustained opposition that it has given to medical progress ever since the decline of Greece when Christianity replaced the culture of Greece and Rome and held undisputed sway for so many centuries. He says:—

While they waited, the struggle for medical knowledge was crushed by the power of the Church; the clergy zealously retained the gathered learning within the monasteries as a scepter to sway the masses, who were kept in ignorance. The teachings of able men were laid aside to be replaced by ridiculous theories and methods which originated in fanaticism and grew upon the ignorance of the people.

Dealing with the outcry against the use of anaesthetics Doctor Haggard says:—

Similar controversies, no doubt equally amusing long after they are over, still arise, and probably will always arise, so long as human Nature remains what it is.

and then he continues:—

Biblical quotations are not amiss in a chapter dealing with the use of anaesthesia, for Biblical quotation and Biblical interpretation formed the basis for the opposition to the use of anaesthesia. The introduction of anaesthesia to alleviate the pains of child-bearing and for surgical operations aroused a violent controversy. It was science *versus* theology and progress *versus* stagnation, and would seem amusing now if it were not for the human suffering involved.

The story of the campaign waged by the clergy against Simpson in the nineteenth century is told in graphic language:—

Simpson and his use of chloroform in childbirth were denounced from the pulpit and by pamphlets. Many otherwise sensible people were thus led by their religious scruples to doubt the propriety of inhaling chloroform. The arguments used by the clergy against anaesthesia varied, but all centred around the theme that pain, particularly the pain of childbirth, was the ordained lot of mankind; to prevent it was a sacrilege. As one clergyman expressed it, "chloroform is a decoy of Satan, apparently offering itself to bless women; but in the end it will harden society and rob God of the deep, earnest cries which arise in time of trouble for help."

Another pointed out that chloroform, like alcohol, produces intoxication and unconsciousness, and on this slender foundation rose to rhetorical heights. He drew a picture of the lying-in room with its former quiet dignity, now giving way under the influence of chloroform to a scene of drunken debauch during which a child was brought into the world.

The authority claimed for those ecclesiastical attacks lay in the Biblical curse placed upon mankind (Gen. 111 16): "Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee." It was the portion "in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children," which was the crux of the matter. According to the prevailing interpretation pain (sorrow) was ordained in childbirth, and the prevention of pain during childbirth "was contrary to religion and the express command of scripture."

Simpson replied to these accusations in a series of

papers, which for theological skill and sound logic left little to be said against the use of chloroform. Simpson was a busy practitioner. His writing was done in snatches, even at the bedsides of the women whom he cared for in their confinements. One can visualize the staunch Scotsman writing some of his passages with a sympathy and a conviction that arose from the groans of his patients. At other times a twinkle must have lit his eyes, and his tongue must have pressed into his cheek as he wrote some of his religious and physiological interpretations. His smile, if it existed, did not once appear as open derision in the simple logic of his words.

It is rather interesting to notice that the opposition to anaesthesia in childbirth, faded out when Queen Victoria accepted chloroform for the delivery of her seventh child, Prince Leopold.

A particularly interesting chapter is that on the plagues which have afflicted mankind. Doctor Haggard says:—

Diseases were once regarded as an affliction from the Deity, a punishment for sin. Even today in law certain forms of disaster are termed "acts of God," such as those due to the uncontrollable forces of nature in hurricanes and the eruptions of volcanoes. In particular the diseases that arose to the proportion of pestilences were considered to be an outpouring of the wrath of a vengeful Deity. They were thought to occur as a punishment for the sins of men, and the Church taught that they were to be accepted with resignation. . . . Under the belief in the divine origin of pestilences and preventives were prayers, incantations, charms, and the sacrifice of animals and even of human beings with which to propitiate the angry God. With the advance of civilization the credulity as to the divine origin of most diseases was gradually replaced by the belief that disease arises from cosmic disturbances. Even down to modern times, such occurrences as eclipses, comets, earthquakes, and tidal waves were regarded as warnings of impending pestilences. When the theological practices failed to ward off the pestilences, men naturally sought to avoid or to escape from them. Their efforts to this end were unorganized. They fled from the pestilence or hid from it as one would flee or hide from a storm. They avoided the sick, as the tangible evidence of the locality in which the rain of the pestilence fell, or as centres from which the biting atmosphere of the pestilence blew.

Belief in the supernatural origin of disease inevitable placed all of the prevention of disease in religion. Medicine was not preventive, it was only a healing art. The part it played was merely accessory to theology. It attempted to relieve the suffering or to save the lives of those from whom the priests or clergymen had been unable to ward off the pestilence. Frequently the practices of religious functions and medical functions were combined. . . .

So long as medicine was subordinate to religion, it could not advance. Medicine is most effective in prevention, and is effective in the cure of epidemic diseases. Even to-day the best medical treatment would not be able to stop any of the pestilences once they got started in a modern American city by merely caring for the sick. The control of the pestilences became possible only when medicine rose from its subordinate position and replaced theology as a means of preventing disease. The prayer for the sick gave place to pills and elixirs, and these in time have given place to quarantine and other measures of prevention.

That the attitude of mind displayed towards disease in the middle ages is still with us, is shown in Doctor Haggard's fearless chapter on pestilence and moralists. He shows us that these well-meaning misguided and criminal puritans who believe to-day that they can wipe out venereal disease by moral measures only, are just as ignorant and illogical as those people who thought that plagues could be cured by prayer. Doctor Haggard says:—

But when concepts of morals are involved in the prevention, fanaticism is aroused even in the highest civilization. There are two pestilences which thus unfortunately involve moral conceptions. They are the plague of syphilis and gonorrhoea. Against them medicine had developed methods of control. They could be eradicated. But as yet civilization has not advanced entirely beyond the ancient belief that disease is imposed by God in vengeance for sin. It still rejects protection. Until the protection is accepted these plagues will continue to

exact death and suffering on a scale which probably exceeds that of any one of the medieval plagues.

Those who to-day still look on syphilis and gonorrhoea as punishments for sin have not progressed beyond the ideas of medieval Europe.

There was an excuse for the Emperor Maximilian when he issued his edict in 1495 declaring syphilis to be an affliction from God for the sins of men. The civilization of his time had not progressed beyond such beliefs. Cotton Mather declared syphilis was a punishment "which the Just Judgment of God has reserved for our late ages." . . . His ignorance was as great as his religious bigotry which led him to drown helpless old women for witchcraft. Ignorance and bigotry are the twin allies of the plagues of syphilis and gonorrhoea. . . .

The word moral has been corrupted from its proper meaning. It was originally the knowledge of right and wrong in the conventions applied to sex. If one were to say correctly that the man who robbed him was immoral most persons hearing the remark would deduce a sexual crime. False conception of morals gives to the word a significance of sex. Moralists who use the word only in this sense carry their thoughts of sex only as far as the act which concerns both the male and the female. Their interest centres there. This conception may be an end in itself for these moralists, but it is not the end for woman. She, not the moralists, bears the children. It is certainly not moral in any sense that women and children infected with syphilis and gonorrhoea shall pay in the coin of suffering for some man's lack of morality. Our conventional morality sees in the venereal diseases a punishment for sin to the third generation.

These false Moralists use the fear of syphilis and gonorrhoea as a bar against illicit sex relations. The very presence of the plagues shows the failure of this bar. The diseases are no more controlled under the moral standards of to-day than they were two centuries ago when a moralist expressed the standard prevailing then by saying that the prostitute was the "angel that spread her protecting wings over the virtue of pure women." The moralists and the ignorant are themselves the panderers, the pimps, of the venereal plagues. There is neither sense nor justice in founding morals on disease. Here is no question of right or wrong. All disease is immoral; but no one disease is more so than another. The morality of the body is health.

In his chapter on the Medical thread in the Moral Snarl Doctor Haggard says:—

The sexual instinct cannot be eradicated. It is as fundamental as the instinct of self-preservation; perhaps it is even more fundamental. It is part of the fibre of the human character. Attempts at its suppression result in its distortion; it cannot be eradicated. On the other hand it can be converted from its natural channels and made to appear as creative work. Great reforms and great endeavours in any field are not accomplished by the emasculated. Such endeavours are the result of the conversion or sublimation of a strong sexual instinct. A certain combativeness is necessary for the saint who goes to martyrdom, and his courage has its roots in sex. The early Christians sublimated their sexual instinct into an enthusiasm for the propagation of their religion. At a later date this enthusiasm lost its original fervour. The sexual instinct remained, and so also did the conception of religious chastity which confused it with celibacy. As chastity became harder to defend, greater efforts were called for its defence. Under the deforming influence of theological interpretation the cardinal virtue of the religion became chastity. All morality was centred in sex. The ideal of chastity became not the purity of the undefiled relations of marriage, but the complete suppression of the whole sexual side of man's nature. The business of religion became the eradication of a natural appetite. Unless outlets are provided for the sexual instinct, either through its natural channels or through sublimation, it makes its own outlets and appears in strange manifestations in the characters of men. The repression exerted on the instinct, like a finger pressed on a globule of mercury, does not destroy it, but simply forces it from its original shape.

In the final Chapter on Civilization and Medicine, Doctor Haggard shows the enormous advance that medical science has made since it finally broke from the priestcraft and his book ends on this note:—

Medicine and civilization advance and regress together. The conditions essential to advance are intellectual cour-

age and a true love for humanity. It is as true to-day as always in the past, that further advance or even the holding of what has already been won, depends upon the extent to which intellectual courage and humanity prevail against bigotry and obscurantism.

If this book is too expensive for some of us we can at least try to procure it from a library.

F. A. HORNIBROOK

## Personality in Apes

THE story I have to unfold has several claims to interest. In the first place, it is a narration of fact, not fiction. All the characters, save one, are chimpanzees, and the results of the experiments carried out on them, besides revealing some rather fascinating ape "personalities," have been hailed as a turning point in the history of psychology.

Let me say at the outset that the achievements to be recorded are far cleverer than anything seen by monkeys and apes at the circus, and not a tenth as spectacular. There is a world of difference between a monkey executing certain movements to arouse the ignorant amusement and excitement of paying customers, and one which, confronted with a problem to solve, evolves the solution by his own unaided thought. The former is mere parrot mimicry, the latter offers an interesting and scientifically valuable load of evidence, not only for the educationalist, not only for the scientist, but also for the Freethought propagandist who seeks to show how the bodily relationships of man with the animal world are accompanied also by mental relatedness. Evolution is true, not only of bodily structure, but of mental development.

What is to be told, therefore, will not be confused with the imitative mechanical movements undergone by the circus animal, which, though by continued repetition it may come to connect its movements with the achievement of its goal, has no more insight into the causative processes at work that the materials with which it deals. It is like a child of three who knows that to press a switch is to turn on the electric light, though why this effect should occur remains a mystery. The whole pitiful story of the performing animal, in fact, is one which might conceivably be of particular interest to Freethought propaganda.

\* \* \*

I said the characters were apes, except one. The latter is Prof. W. Kohler, the experimenter, from whose report,\* spoiled from the point of view of style and arrangement, and marred by cumbersome phrasing, probably incurred largely by translation from the German, it is possible to select an orderly arrangement of the experiments in consecutive fashion, beginning with the simplest, a statement of conclusions, and a portrait of each ape, as well as of their friendships, pastimes and exhibitions of emotion.

The experiments took place mainly at the Tenerife Anthropoid Station, and we can now enumerate the inmates. There was only one large ape,

*Tschego*, a mature female. On account of her size and maturity she was the accepted leader of the little group. She it was to whom the oppressed would fly for protection, and around whom they all would cluster in time of common danger. At the same time, she lived only for peace, and hated to be disturbed. Her moodiness seemed to be a natural consequent of the menstrual periods. At times she would swipe out at, or bite, an animal fleeing from justice or romping too close to her peaceful corner. Quarrels near

\* *The Mentality of Apes.*

her she would not tolerate, and would come down with a heavy hand on the disputants. Her protective custody, however, was much sought, and her change of place or occupation would be frequently followed.

Grande was the oldest and strongest of the small apes. Like Tschego, she had always a preference for *terra firma*, and could not be easily induced to undertake dangerous or gymnastic experiments. This preference for the ground threw Grande and Tschego into a close friendship, so that they became "a group within a group." Grande's distinguishing mark seems to have been a love of battle-play. She would work up a fiery temper ("she was really a kind-hearted creature," we are assured), rattle her drum or box, and assault something or someone, or take a kick at the wall. Köhler remarks that the casual observer, seeing her eye-flashing, box-beating and leg-thumping, the whole set off by her exquisite and plentiful black hair, would not care to stay in her company any longer than he could help. She sobered down quickly after her dashes, however, would hang around Köhler and with a playful slap at his legs would dash off to her play. As it happened, she was the most patient ape in an experiment, in contrast to her hated enemy, Chica, the expert gymnast, who sometimes would stop working at a problem and make an impetuous attempt at the object, trusting to her gymnastic prowess. Chica was timid, and not much given to holding her own. (Possibly her nimbleness in getting away relieved her of this necessity). Her friend was Tercera, another female, and "the strong, helping half" of an enduring friendship. Köhler describes this ape as an enigma. She was certainly lazy in experiment, and rather destructive. In collective experiments she was usually found "sitting on the box" (perhaps waiting to claim the rewards of someone else's ingenuity.) She was of an extremely jealous nature.

Rana was the most stupid ape by far. She was also extremely assiduous. Put these two qualities together and you will see that she was always "showing herself up." She was quite persistent in face of a problem—but persistently dull. She was not popular with the others, especially Tschego, who scorned her. Thus, not readily accepted by the others, and often the butt of practical jokes, she would endeavour to make friends with Köhler, but more particularly took possession of the little male,

Konsul, who seemed to be the most popular of any, for they all "took to him" by turns, at which times poor Rana had to stand down. Nevertheless, she remained faithful right up to his untimely death. Konsul appears to have been the destructive comedian of the party. In experiment, he was shy and lazy.

The ages of the small apes were three to four years at the time of the experiments. Chica, Tercera and Rana were females of about the same age, and, besides Konsul, there was another young male, the famous genius whose name has slipped into many subsequent works on animal psychology, the great Sultan, who proceeded farthest and quickest along the line of experiment. His rather more complex character will come out as we proceed. Whatever he was—sulky, spiteful, conciliatory, solicitous, playful, selfish, "foxy,"—he was intelligently so. Köhler tells us he bore his leadership distinctions badly, and not until he was much older did he become really master.

Two others were later added, but their characters are most conveniently dealt with in considering the reaction of the company to newcomers. The apes could behave as a unified body on such occasions, enmities being forgotten. At other times they would divide into factions among themselves. In the general give-and-take of play, it might have been diffi-

cult to spot any particular friendships, but in time of fear or danger we should then see which two rushed to a corner together. We might, again, see which two slept together, and, though overridden by transient friendships with Konsul, the associations were on the whole enduring ones, and not, of course, governed by sex.

Tschego was at first friendly to Sultan, who tried to monopolize her by keeping the others away. But he angered the big ape, and finally squatted unnoticed near her, with greater respect, still trying to keep the others off, until Tschego herself began to drive him off.

It is hoped, next, to study some of the experiments with these animals.

G. H. TAYLOR

## A Fine Anti-Nazi Play

"TILL THE DAY I DIE"

AN American Freethinker, Clifford Odets, was first recognized as a real dramatist in this country when early in 1938 his play, "Golden Boy," was produced by an enthusiastic Group Theatre cast to an appreciative London theatre audience. The play was rapturously received by critics and public alike, and succeeded in running for many months at the St. James's Theatre. Prior to "Golden Boy," Odets had had two plays produced in America, but although these plays, "Waiting for Lefty," and "Till the Day I Die," were successful on Broadway, they were not licensed for public showing over here. True, "Waiting for Lefty" was produced by a Communist theatre group more than three years ago, and ran at the little Unity Theatre for several months, but as the Unity happened to be a Club and not a Theatre, those fortunate enough to witness "Lefty" were club members. The other play, "Till the Day I Die," where the Communist propaganda was negligible, suffered a more inglorious fate even than "Lefty." It couldn't obtain the Censor's licence for public showing, and there was no playhouse running on subscription lines with the courage to put on such an indictment of a Fascist country. Thus, "Till the Day I Die" was compelled to suffer the same fate as the Russian film, "Professor Mamlock," although the latter was eventually shown with substantial "cuts." Commenting in the *Freethinker* of May 28, 1939, on the Censor's refusal to licence "Mamlock," I wrote:

"I have no hesitation in labelling 'Professor Mamlock' the greatest piece of anti-dictator propaganda ever made. It would appear though that many members of the National Government do not want anti-dictator propaganda on view just now; they are too keen on learning how to become miniature Hitlers themselves." What I said about "Mamlock" would have been equally applicable to "Till the Day I Die" as a play. Originally written less than two years after the Nazis came into power, and produced almost immediately by the Theatre Guild in New York, it was then, and is to-day, the most damning indictment of the Hitlerian regime ever to be presented in public. Now, years afterwards, Londoners are at last afforded the opportunity of seeing "Till the Day I Die" in wartime. It was recently produced at the little Threshold Theatre off Notting Hill Gate, and is, at the time of writing, being performed there nightly.

It is, of course, possible that after the glut of anti-Nazi plays and films—a few of them good, but most of them bad—the general public will experience a distinct aversion to seeing anything else about present-day Germany on the stage. I fervently hope that this will not be the case. For here is a tragedy which takes one in its stride; carrying everything along with it like the last bars of a great symphony.

Dealing with the underground movement in Germany in the early days of the Nazi Government, the story centres around a young violinist who until captured by the Nazis has taken a leading part in promoting opposition to the regime. We are shown, in a number of poignant

nant scenes, his capture, his meeting in a German Brown House with an old comrade, now a Nazi Major, whose Jewish ancestry has escaped the knowledge of the new masters he serves; his complete mutilation at the hands of his oppressors; and finally his trial when, with ghastly irony, he is pronounced a traitor by his own comrades. The dramatic effect is heightened by the fact that a Nazi officer is murdered, and another is so ashamed of his vile job that, obsessed both mentally and physically, he commits suicide. Here then is a study in both sociology and pathology. But Mr. Odets does not simply stop short after showing the conflicts between the individuals themselves and their struggles; for the groups of underground fighters we watch seem to symbolize the cheated, oppressed, suffering, but fundamentally pacific people who have for so many years past dedicated their lives to the cause of freedom. We see groups of men and women plotting, loving, arguing, dreaming, groaning, fighting. We are held by the spectacle because what we see and hear we now know to be essentially true. Here are the things that happen daily in Nazi Germany, arranged in conformity with what we feel, after abundant evidence, is the truth.

It would be churlish to close without paying tribute to a more than competent cast of professional actors, who, with Mr. Geoffrey Hibbert in the principal role, never once get out of focus. I will only say that, among others, Miss Sheila Keith as "Tilly," the Jewess whom the Nazis brand as a prostitute, is exceptionally good, and the production by Miss Molly Terraine is both sympathetic and skilful.

It is, of course, a debatable question whether films such as "Professor Mamlock" and "Pastor Hall," and plays like "Till the Day I Die," would have gone so far as to prevent this war, if shown prior to last September. But they would have made the "man in the street" a little more aware of what Hitlerism really stood for; a vile growth of which he now shows signs of becoming painfully aware. If there are still people who do not know what we are fighting for in this war I urge them to visit the Threshold Theatre at their first opportunity. There running is a play which should be seen by all people who still have faith in the Theatre as a serious art; more important still, it should succeed in warning all those lovers of freedom who are fortunate enough to witness it.

PETER NORTHCOTE

## Correspondence

### FAITH AND FIRST AID

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—The following instances are typical of the attitude which many people adopt when asked to interest themselves in First Aid work.

One lady replied: "If I have to help, the Almighty will tell me what to do."

Another said: "I don't need to learn, it will come to me, or I can look it up, if necessary."

These are verbatim replies to appeals made in the village in which I reside.

EDGAR SVERS

Enlightenment and education, as a rule, go hand in hand with a decrease of the clergy in relative numbers and influence.—*F. A. Lange.*

Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice;  
Take each man's censure, but reserve thy judgment.  
*Shakespeare*

Science is simply common sense at its best—that is, rigidly accurate in observation, and merciless to fallacy in logic.—*Huxley.*

## Freethinkers and the Forces

FREETHINKERS liable for services in H.M. Forces should clearly understand their rights with regard to religion.

They should insist upon their own statement of Atheist, Agnostic, Rationalist, or non-religious being accepted, without modification, and duly recorded on the official papers.

If the person recording—usually an N.C.O. is not aware of the recruit's rights and refuses to accept the recruit's own statement, he should insist upon the matter being referred to the officer in charge. If the recruit's legal right is not then admitted, information should be sent to the General Secretary N.S.S. without delay. In all cases hitherto reported by the Society to the Army, Navy and Air Force authorities a satisfactory reply has been received.

Finally, a man serving in any of the Forces has the right at any time to have the description of himself with regard to religion altered should any change of opinion on his part have taken place.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. E. J. Page.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 6.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. G. W. Fraser. Highbury Corner, 7.30, Friday, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 7.30, Thursday, Mr. E. C. Saphin and supporting speakers. Sunday, 3.0, until dusk, various speakers.

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR

BLACKBURN MARKET: 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

HAPTON: 7.15, Wednesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound): 7.30, Mr. Smithies. A Lecture.

SCOTTBOTTOM: 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

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