

THANKS TO HITLER

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Views and Opinions

Thanks to Hitler

THANKS to Hitler! I say this without the slightest degree of sarcasm. I say it although I detest the man, his methods, his aims, and if I had the power I would make it plain that whenever the war ends he and, more importantly, those leaders behind him should be placed beyond the pale of the usual treatment given to civilized enemies and treated as incurable criminals. That the gangster Government of Germany will be defeated I have not the slightest doubt. All its conquests are so many steps to that end. Even a generation that has been largely educated on newspaper scraps ought to realize that. Tyrannies rot from within, and from the impact of opposing ideas. And in the constant and indispensable propaganda of the Fascist Government there is always the danger of suggesting the opposite. That is a factor to which all intelligent teachers are keenly alive.

I say "Thanks to Hitler" because he has, inadvertently, given the world a lesson in the real nature of war, although it says little for the intelligence of the general public that it should have needed a second world-war to teach them the moral. The insincerity of the 1914 cry "A war to end war"—which Mr. Wells says he believed—must be replaced by a stern resolve to make that result a statement of fact. We can, if we will, make the end of this war a firm beginning of the process that will really end war. To do that the conquest of Hitlerism must be the prelude to the humanizing of the world.

Hitler has declared a "totalitarian war," that is, a whole-time war. He is doing this openly, boldly and without stint. He says, and I agree with him, that totalitarian war is a war against armed forces, against civilians, against old men, women and children, the sick and the hale. He has been denounced for saying this. I think the world ought to thank him for it. I do not believe he has enough intelligence to realize the full significance of his statement. To him it was

a kind of apology to himself for being the ignorant brute he is. Nor is the statement destitute, as most psychologists will realize, of the element of fear. It is the expression of a character that is responsible for the confession that he is a liar, one who will not keep his word when it is to his interest to break it, and will stop at no savagery that will achieve his ends. Let us be just to Hitler, as I believe history will be just to him, and declare that from one point of view he has shown himself to be the most honest of dishonest statesmen, the most truthful liar of the modern political and diplomatic world. He has shown himself to be a straightforward scoundrel, and people, unused to that type of confessed scoundrelism, have been deceived right and left. Why at any time any one should even have professed to place reliance on his word it is difficult to say. Perhaps it was because political leaders believed that a vote at the polls endowed them with wisdom. Perhaps it was because our statesmen thought they could use Hitler. In the sum he used them, and left them a laughing stock for future historians.

* * *

The Nature of War

Hitler, as I have said, means by a totalitarian war one that includes the *whole* of a nation. Whether they actually carry arms or not is of no consequence. Much as I detest war I agree with him. I go further and say that there never has been a war between peoples or nations that was not a totalitarian war to the exact extent of opportunity. The only non-totalitarian war that I can think of would be one in which each side selected a champion and victory went to the nation to which the victor belonged. And even that would not be quite so, since there would remain the consequence of the peace to the vanquished. But short of that method, every war is totalitarian in its general conduct and in its consequences.

Let us go back a few years and imagine that Scotland has declared war on England. The Scottish troops reach as far south as York and invest the city. The investing army stops all and every kind of supply entering the city. If it uses artillery the missiles are not at all selective as to whom they kill. If the people of York suggested sending out the very young and the very old, the sick and the wounded, the besiegers would refuse to allow them to pass. The reply to such a suggestion would be that the fewer the people left to eat the longer the Yorkists could withstand the assault.

Meanwhile the people of Scotland would be manufacturing whatever arms were being sent, they would have to provide food, clothing and wages for the soldiers, they would be that part of the forces without which the war would quickly collapse. What is that but totalitarian war up to the limits of the situation?

Move up to modern times. We have developed so far as to agree that when a city is taken there ought to

be no raping of women, nor robbery, nor ill-treatment of civilian survivors. But to what other extent have we altered the situation? We, or the enemy, establish a blockade. We will allow neither food nor medicine nor clothing to reach the civilian population, and neither we nor the enemy would permit medicines, food, or anything else reaching the armed forces. And it is certain that if it were suggested that all the sick, the aged, the infirm, the very young, were to be moved out of England or Germany, neither side would agree to it being done. It would be said, rightly said, that this was helping "the enemy." War, in this respect, has not altered. It has become more deadly, but it was always as deadly as it could be. And we are considering quality, not quantity. A war does not alter its quality because in the one case bows and arrows are used and in the other machine-guns. Death and destruction, demoralization and decay, punishing the children, the sick, the insane, are features of every war. Whether the aged and the young are killed as a secondary consequence of the war is not important.

The plain truth is that the *whole* of a people never have gone and never can go to the fighting front. When Mr. Bevin told the highly intelligent House of Commons that if *his* army—the army in the workshop, in the mines, the shipyards, etc.—were disheartened then we could count the war lost, he was coming down to cold unromantic facts. We are even recognizing it on posters and by appeals that we must all help to win the war if the war is to be won. This war is on the largest and on the most merciless scale that war has ever been waged, and more than ever it is clear that our whole resources, material and mental, must take part in it if we are to win.

In what way then can any of us be considered non-belligerent? Is it the scientist in his laboratory who studies to make warfare more deadly than it is? Is it the man who can devise some method of securing ships from being sunk, or the man working in the field who must provide food for the people—including the army. Is it the journalist who helps at least to keep people amused, or interested? Is it the Minister of Foreign Affairs who believes there are a sufficient number of people in the country as stupid as himself, and that the war may be won by praying circles? Is it the King or the Archbishop of Canterbury who believe that a day of ordered prayer will help towards victory? Would Hitler be wrong, in a military sense, provided he believed that prayer would win the war, if he used a selective sort of a weapon that would kill everyone directly they started praying? Is it stupidity or just plain ordinary lying that keeps up the fiction that when a country is at war there are actually belligerents and non-belligerents?

This aspect of war is so clear that I take little credit to myself that one of my earliest contributions to this paper dwelt upon this truth. We are all realizing it now, and we are told that we are all in the war—this war. But we were all in every war the country has fought. And one feels a little ashamed that it needed the war of 1914, when for the first time the people of this country found themselves in the fighting line, to enable them to realize so obvious a truth. Hitler has shown the world the real character of war, and if we learn that lesson aright we must learn to say "never again" with a sincerity that is deeper and stronger than when it was used as a recruiting slogan in 1914-18.

* * *

Looking Forward

How is this to be realized? As is not unusual with great questions the answer is simple, because it affirms principles only. It is the application of the principles that is difficult, because that calls for patience, a realization of the difficulties in the way, and a sense

of real values that must be developed if we are to succeed in our aim.

On one side there is a demand for the destruction of nationality. I do not see it in that light. In the imaginary new world of which some of us dream, English, German, French, Italian, life will be distinct if the development of the human race is to continue. Art, literature, music, all the higher aspects of life will retain their differences of manifestation. They must do so unless we are to become no better than robots. There will be the familiar association of persons, the love of local scenery, the attachment to local customs, and so forth. These will persist, and it is important that they should persist. For the condition of progress in all directions is diversity in unity, or unity in diversity, whichever way one cares to put it. This diversity is above other things valuable in matters of opinion. It is in religion alone that diversity spells destruction. Art, science, philosophy and literature exhibit this value of unity in diversity in the clearest manner. Even politics and sociology, so far as it has advanced has done so under the same conditions. It is as bad for groups to live alone as it is for individuals. Those pseudo-scientific folk who rail against nationality are on a level with a bird that objects to the atmosphere because it limits the speed at which it might go. Without it there would be no flight.

What has to be killed is not merely the idea that nations *ought* to live alone, but the idea that they *can* live alone. Our politicians and others, who but a short time back were talking against collective action, proved only their complete unfitness to guide public opinion. Collective action there must be wherever two groups of people come into contact. Then the behaviour of one group is determined by the behaviour of the other group. We may be in friendly relations and our conduct will be of one order, we may be in unfriendly relations and our conduct is of another order. There is collective action when the object is to join in the development of the friendly side of life, but there is equally collective action when we watch each with our fingers on the triggers of guns. Action and reaction between groups that are in contact is inevitable. Whether it is a friendly or unfriendly reaction is a matter of detail. The principle of collective action remains unaffected.

War may stop a dispute but it does not settle it. The application of force does not convince the losing party he is wrong, only that he is physically weaker than the other party. As 1914 proved to the world, submission is made by one of the parties in conditions that inevitably develop the desire to hit back somehow and at some time. The appeal to arms is an appeal to force whenever and however made. As in the present conflict, it may be that no other course is open, but that should not blind thoughtful men and women to the nature of the "settlement" that is to be achieved.

* * *

A Suggestion

At a critical moment of the war before the collapse of the French Army, our Prime Minister offered to establish a common citizenship with France. There was to be one army and navy and air force, one currency and a common citizenship. If that had been accepted at the outset of the war it might have meant a complete difference in the conduct of affairs. As it is it indicates the kind of direction in which we ought to work. At the opening of the last war I said in these columns that we were in the midst of a civil war. That is doubly true of this one. Over a large part of the world it is sheer delusion to act as though the different nations were absolute entities. One might as well think of Manchester and London or Nurem-

burg and Berlin as being independent entities. There is not a country in the world that can build a wall round itself and so make itself independent. We have to work together or fight together. Peace, real peace, or world piracy is the choice before us. An "armed peace" is a sheer absurdity. It means living in a state of war in which the death-roll is reduced to its lowest, and the process of demoralization less active than during formal warfare.

Now suppose that the offer of Churchill to France had been accepted. Suppose, either during the war or after, the United States had entered the confederation, with a common agreement of free and equal access to the wealth of the "possessions" of these peoples. Suppose also that all other nations were invited to enter the confederation on the same terms, and that so long as it were necessary a common armed force should be maintained for the purpose of resisting aggression. Is there any nation in the world that would dare to attack such a combination? How many of the smaller and weaker nations would wish to stand outside?

The United States itself is an example of what may be done in that direction. If the North had, little more than two generations ago, submitted to the Southern States converting themselves into a separate federation, we might have seen two competing powers armed to the teeth, maintaining an armed peace, and the repercussion on Canada would not have been negligible.

It is well for us, at the moment, that Britannia rules the seas. But it is idiotic to assume that the civilized world will for ever submit to one nation commanding movement along the highway of the world. We must take the first steps towards the creation of the super-State if civilization is to survive. To imagine that the world can gain a real peace merely by beating Germany is ridiculous. To think that war may be ended by the adoption of this or that economic or religious or ethical theory, is but to glorify this or that form of monomania. National differences must continue, with whatever differences of culture and rule that may be. Progress needs difference, rather than uniformity, for development. Our immediate task is to crush Hitlerism, but even that victory will fall short of its chief merit if it does not open our eyes to the larger issue.

That is why I have headed these notes "Thanks to Hitler."

CHAPMAN COHEN

The Gentle Art of Irony

Shall quips and sentences, and these paper bullets of the brain awe a man from the career of his humour?
Shakespeare

BYRON once said that "ridicule is the only weapon the English climate cannot rust." Yet it is not popular in this country, and irony has many enemies. Simple people, who must be literal or nothing, dislike it. Women, more often than not, do not care for it at all. And those other wearers of petticoats, the clergy, whose professional gravity prompts them, look askance at irony as being something unseemly. Every great wit in literature has been a man of serious aims, and the greatest writers have been the greatest wits from the far-off days of Aristophanes to those of Anatole France. Some of the best masters of irony have been among the most earnest soldiers of progress.

Perhaps the most perfect examples of irony are to be found in Voltaire's *Candide*, the wittiest book in the world. Here is an example taken at random. When *Candide* was to be punished as a military deserter:—

He was asked which he would like the best, to be whipped six and thirty times through all the regiment, or to receive at once twelve bullets in his brain. He vainly said that human will is free, and that he chose neither the one nor the other. He was forced to make a choice. He determined, in virtue of that gift of God called liberty, to run the gauntlet six and thirty times.

After Voltaire, Heine is perhaps the most brilliant of all ironists. For seven years prior to his death he lay sick and solitary on a "mattress-grave," his back twisted, his legs paralysed, his hands powerless, his sight failing. "God's satire weighs heavily upon me," he said:—

The great Author of the Universe, the Aristophanes of Heaven was bent on demonstrating with crushing force to me, the little so-called German Aristophanes, how my weightiest sarcasms are only pitiful attempts at jesting in comparison with His, and how miserably I am beneath Him in humour, in colossal mockery.

The untamable humorist kept his most wonderful jest for the last. Reproached by friends for his levity in religious matters, he said: "God will forgive me. It is His trade."

A splendid example of sustained irony is to be found in Gibbon's famous fifteenth chapter of the *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, sketching with masterly skill the rise of the Christian religion. Gibbon's command of language is masterly. Listen, for example, to his impressive picture of the Christian Knight-errant who:—

As the champion of God and the ladies (I blush to unite such discordant names) devoted himself to speak the truth, maintain the right, and protect the distressed.

A far more genial satirist was Anatole France, who in *My Friend's Book* describes Pierre Noziere's childish passion towards the saintly life with inimitable grace and irony:—

My sole idea was to live the life of an ascetic. In order to lose no time in putting my ideas in operation, I refused to eat my breakfast. My mother, who knew nothing of my new vocation, thought I was ill, and looked at me with anxiety which it pained me to behold. Nevertheless, I persevered with my fasting, and then, remembering Saint Simeon Stylites, who spent his life on a pillar, I climbed up to the kitchen cistern, but our cook, Julie, promptly dislodged me. I next decided to imitate Saint Nicholas of Patras, who gave all his riches to the poor. My father's study window looked out on to the quay, and from it I flung down a dozen coppers or so which had been presented to me because they were new and bright. These I followed up with marbles, humming-top, whip-top, and whip. "The child is crazy," said my father as he shut the window.

I felt angry and mortified at hearing the judgment, but I remembered that my father, not being a saint like myself, would not go to heaven, a reflection from which I derived great consolation.

Dean Swift was also a master of irony. Voltaire recommended the *Tale of a Tub* as a trenchant satire against religion in general, and Thackeray denied Swift's belief in that Christian religion which he defended so ironically in his caustic *Arguments Against Abolishing Christianity*. The most striking example of Swift's mordant humour is *A Modest Proposal*, which is a reasoned proposition to use for food the superfluous children of the poor. Sustained irony will also be found in Henry Fielding's *History of Jonathan Wild the Great*, and in the acidulated pages of Flaubert. It also lurks in the robust humour of Rabelais, and in the suggestive sentences of Denis Diderot. Under the polite periods of Ernest Renan

there is much irony, as in the great scholar's criticism of the Bible character, David :—

We shall see the brigand of Adullam and Ziklag assume gradually the airs of a saint. He will be the author of the Psalms, the type of the future saviour. Jesus must be the son of David. The evangelical biography will be falsified in a multitude of points by the idea that the life of the Messiah should reproduce the traits of David. Pious souls, while enjoying the sentiments, full of resignation and tender melancholy, of the finest of liturgical books, will fancy themselves in communion with this bandit.

Humanity will believe in final justice on the testimony of David, who never thought of it, and of the Sybil, who never existed. O the divine comedy.

Readers of Matthew Arnold will recall that exquisite thrust at the "Three Lord Shaftesburys" and also the episode of the portly jeweller from Cheapside who shuddered at the very idea that no man is necessary to the mundane movement. And who has not smiled with Arnold himself waving away the title of "Professor," when appointed to the chair of literature at Oxford University. "I leave that title," he said, "to Professor Holloway and Professor Pepper, who adorn the title so much more than I can ever hope to do." The point of the joke was that "Professor" Holloway was a pill manufacturer, and "Professor" Pepper travelled the country with a ghost-illusion show. Another great English writer, Thomas Hardy, has introduced much irony in his novels, particularly in the concluding chapter of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, in which he makes play with "the President of the Immortals."

These are but a few examples of the irony in literature. But they are sufficient to show that the ordinary dictionary definition is inadequate. It is not nearly enough to say that irony is :—

A mode of speech expressing a sense contrary to that which the speaker intends to convey.

This may be true enough of the simple, elementary irony of the man in the street who called after the lady cyclist with large feet, "Hullo Cinderella!" but it by no means defines the far more complex irony of literature. We much prefer George Meredith's definition :—

If instead of falling foul of the ridiculous person with a satiric rod to make him writhe and shriek aloud, you prefer to sting him with a semi-caress, by which he shall in his anguish be rendered dubious whether, indeed, anything has hurt him, you are an engine of irony.

This was superbly said by one of the great masters of language. And, where in all contemporary literature is there more sustained irony than in the work of Bernard Shaw?

MIMNERMUS

The missionaries carry on their propaganda with an almost reckless disregard of international consequences. They risk the cause of civilization, and the fact cannot be overlooked that the manner in which the missionaries have been smuggled into the country against the will of the people, and the injudicious methods by which they have sought to establish their religion are mainly responsible for the anti-foreign feeling which is subversive of our interests in the Far East. The presence of the missionaries in the interior of China is due to a trick which reflects little credit on its perpetrator, and although the latter was not an Englishman, we cannot deny having availed ourselves of the opportunity to profit by a dishonest action. . . . The consequence [of this trick] is that the foreign missions of late years have practically been forced upon the Chinese at the point of the bayonet.—Harold E. Grosst in *China*.

Islam and Christendom

(Continued from page 517)

ALL we know of Christian Origins is held within the compass of the specific literature of the Church and its Canonical (or uncanonical) scriptures. This record is replete with miraculous and supernatural happenings. The institution of the faith is a tremendous divine phenomenon emanating from Deity :—

God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

When we seek to pierce the veil that shrouds these alleged happenings, and desecry the actual sources of such beliefs so triumphantly acclaimed—we touch a baffling historic issue. Various conflicting explanations are advanced by the pundits who give it special study, which are open to one and all interested to take their choice—or leave it at that. . . . When Islam enters on the scene, Christianity under various interpretations and Communion was established in Europe; and the Eastern Roman Empire carried its authority into Syria, Egypt and N. Africa. At the outset the new faith exhibited itself as a deadly opponent.

On the main facts of its birth the historians are pretty well agreed; and there is not the keen dispute thereon that encircles its predecessor. Yet not a few miracles and supernatural seemings are reported of the founder in his day. And all we know thereof comes through Arabic and Muslim sources.⁶ The accepted story may be summarized thus: Arabia in the seventh century was a free country lying in its desert fastness beyond the range of the marching Legions and militant activities of several cults and sects. It provided a refuge for ill-fated disciples of various faiths, for persecuted and persecutors in turn—a phenomenon by no means confined to the Church. The Arabs had their own loosely held indigenous beliefs and superstitions; and an object of veneration was a black stone (the Caaba) preserved in a temple at Mecca, their chief and much esteemed city. From these sects a mass of floating contradictory notions pervaded the mental atmosphere; and the Bible is said to be known in an Arabic version in Mohammed's day. The Arabs, a proud and warlike people, lived in independent tribes or groups of tribes with a traditional descent from the outcast Ishmael of Genesis; their relations were enlivened by blood feuds and predatory excursions.

This body of circulating opinion incited among the more curious the desire to find the truth, amid it all; and we hear of certain seekers or *hanifs* in this con-

⁶ "For the life of Mohammed the only contemporary sources, the only sources which we can accept without any reservation are: (a) the Koran. . . . The order of the Suras has been thoroughly investigated by Noldeke, and by Weil; and (from the character and style of the revelations, combined with occasional references to events) they can be arranged in periods, and in some cases assigned to definite years. . . . (b) A collection of Treaties. . . . (2) The other sources for the life of Mohammed is tradition (*Hadith*). The Ashab or companions of Mohammed were unimpeachably good authorities as to the events of his life; and they told much of what they knew in reply to the eager questions of the Tabiin or Successors—the younger generation who knew not the Prophet. But it was not till the end of the first century of the Hijra or the beginning of the second that any attempt was made to commit to writing the knowledge of Mohammed's life, which passed from lip to lip and was ultimately derived from the companions, few of whom can have survived the 60th year of the Hijra. [The retreat to Medina.] The first work on Mohammed that we know of was composed at the Court of the later Omayyads by al-Zuhri, who died in the year A.D. 742. It is deeply to be regretted that the work has not survived. . . . Zuhri's book, however, was used by his successors. . . ." Appendix to Gibbon Vol V., by J. B. Bury.

nexion. Among such may be reckoned a young man (Mohammed), belonging to the leading family or clan of Mecca—the Koreish. He was engaged as a merchant in the service of a rich widow (whom he married) and directed caravan journeys into Syria in his work. He was early interested in religious inquiry and was given on occasion to withdraw for solitary meditation in the desert. About the age of forty, as the issue of these celestial vigils, he appeared among his intimates with the announcement that he had received from on High through the Angel Gabriel a final "revelation" to supersede all previous partial revelations, and was commissioned to announce this to the world. Put shortly it affirms: 'There is no God but God, and Mohammed is His Apostle or interpreter; its essence is (inward) Peace or resignation to the Divine Will.

The "prophet" has gifts of speech and a fine presence, qualities much admired by his compatriots, if said to be comparatively illiterate. His message is accepted at once by some of his intimates; with scepticism by others. Growing bolder he publicly proclaims his mission and doctrine, which arouses also hostility, and he finds it convenient to retire to the City of Medina some 200 miles to the North. Here he gathers a body of adherents, and soon violence is added as a further weapon to advance the "truth"; introducing into normal tribal strife a religious dogma. Islam so begins its militant course, and with a success equal to the establishment of a spiritual and temporal power in Arabia by the close of the Prophet's career.

The genesis and acceptance of dogma is not easy of elucidation. An allusive passage of Gibbon is of service here⁷ :—

It is the boast of the Jewish apologists that, while the learned nations of antiquity were deluded by the fables of polytheism, their simple ancestors of Palestine preserved the knowledge and worship of the true God. The moral attributes of Jehovah may not easily be reconciled with the standard of *human* virtue; his metaphysical qualities are darkly expressed; but each page of the Pentateuch and the Prophets is an evidence of his power; the unity of his name is inscribed on the first table of the law; and his sanctuary was never defiled by any visible image of the invisible essence. After the ruin of the temple, the faith of the Hebrew exiles was purified, fixed, and enlightened by the spiritual devotion of the synagogue. . . . But the children of Israel had ceased to be a people; and the religions of the world were guilty, at least in the eyes of the prophet, of giving sons, or daughters, or companions, to the supreme God. In the rude idolatry of the Arabs, the crime is manifest and audacious. . . .

The Christians of the seventh century had insensibly relapsed into a semblance of paganism; their public and private vows were addressed to the relics and images that disgraced the temples of the East; the throne of the Almighty was darkened by a cloud of martyrs, and saints, and angels, the objects of popular veneration; and the Collyridian heretics, who flourished in the fruitful soil of Arabia, invested the Virgin Mary with the name and honours of a goddess. The mysteries of the Trinity and Incarnation appear to contradict the principle of the divine unity. In their obvious sense they introduce three equal deities, and transform the man Jesus into the substance of the son of God; an orthodox commentary will satisfy only a believing mind; and each of the Oriental sects was eager to confess that all except themselves, deserved the reproach of idolatry and polytheism. The creed of Mahomet is freed from suspicion or ambiguity; the Koran is a glorious testimony to the unity of God. . . . In the author of the Universe, his rational enthusiasm confessed and

adored an infinite and eternal being, without form or place, without issue or similitude, present to our most secret thoughts, existing by the necessity of his own nature, and deriving from himself all moral and intellectual perfection. These sublime truths, thus announced in the language of the prophet⁸ are firmly held by his disciples, and defined with metaphysical precision by the interpreters of the Koran.

Hence the specious claim that all previous divine intimations were limited in purpose.

The God of nature has written his existence on all his works and his law in the heart of man. To restore the knowledge of the one, and the practice of the other has been the real or pretended aim of the prophets of every age; the liberality of Mahomet allowed to his predecessors the same credit which he claimed for himself; and the chain of inspiration was prolonged from the fall of Adam to the promulgation of the Koran. . . . The piety of Moses and of Christ rejoiced in the assurance of a future prophet more illustrious than themselves; the evangelic promise of the *Paraclete*, or Holy Ghost, was prefigured in the name, and accomplished in the person of Mahomet, the greatest and the last of the apostles of God. . . .⁹

Communications over the celestial wire, developing concrete aspects of the doctrine, were delivered from time to time to his intimate disciples, and preserved to be published in full after his death under the title of Al-Koran (=book to be read) . . . How far hallucination or imposture entered into such lucubration must be left to surmise; incited by the dangerous lure of spiritual power. They include regulations for the conduct of the Faithful in things like marriage, alms, prayer, fasting. Neither do the "sublime truths" exclude minor entities, angels, genii, Iblis (our old acquaintance the Devil) with a sort of Hell, last Judgment, and a Paradise for the true believer compact of every sensuous satisfaction appealing to the temperament and appetite of his early followers; with delightful-feminine creatures around. Speedy entrance to this Valhalla was the reward of death in battle for the Faith. As one leader is reported, at the crisis of a desperate contest in their first predations: "Paradise is before you, the devil and hell-fire in your rear!" Byron's lines come to mind where, in a modern siege, an old Turk fighting with his five sons disdains quarter¹⁰ :—

The eldest was a true and tameless Tartar,
As great a scorner of the Nazarene
As ever Mahomet picked out for a martyr,
Who only saw the black-eyed girls in green,
Who make the beds of those who won't take quarter
On earth, in Paradise; and when once seen,
These Houris, like all other pretty creatures,
Do just whate'er they please, by dint of features.

Thus the young Khan with Houris in his sight,
Thought not upon the charms of four young brides,
But bravely rushed on his first heavenly night.
In short, howe'er *our* better faith derides,
These black-eyed virgins make the Moslems fight,
As though there were one Heaven and none besides—
Whereas, if all be true we hear of Heaven
And Hell, there must at least be six or seven.

So fully flashed the phantom on his eyes,
That when the very lance was in his heart,
He shouted "Allah!" and saw Paradise
With all its veil of mystery drawn apart,
And bright Eternity without disguise
On his soul, like a ceaseless sunrise, dart;
With Prophets, Houris, Angels, Saints descried
In one voluptuous blaze—and then he died.

AUSTEN VERNEY

(To be continued)

⁸ Which retains anthropomorphic terms.

⁹ St. John xvi. et seq.

¹⁰ From his mordant description in *Don Juan* of the storming of Ismail on the Danube by the Russians in 1790.

⁷ Much study had been given to Islam by Oriental scholars when Gibbon wrote: Since reinforced by others.

"By Which We Live"

ONE can understand most people shrinking from Free Thought. The human mind is inherently lazy and timid; and it is easier to accept comforting, ready-made, nostalgic "solutions" of the problems of life and death invented by other minds than to wrestle, like Jacob with the legendary angel at Peniel, and out of one's own struggles to arrive painfully at what may be the Truth or, at least, the Truth-for-Oneself. Few of us, indeed possess:—

A thirst to spend our fire and restless force
In tracking out our true original course.

This is why, many, perhaps most, people find mental peace in the acceptance of Authority. Like convicts or soldiers they merely have to hear and obey, and for that surrender of their personalities they are clothed and fed and relieved of the necessity of making decisions.

Many such folk accept "The Church" as infallible director. But the minds of such folk are kept minds—no more to be respected than kept women. The words of the Church or the Bible—even when those words are as they sometimes can be, like all other words, the trumpet-call of human genius—are merely a stupefying drug for them. The Russian Lenin perceived this clearly when he declared Religion to be the opium of the people. We all know how the unthinking acceptance of any system of thought or half-thought can benumb the creative faculty. We can all see how genuinely religious people will swallow the vilest nonsense or wickedness, blind to its true nature, when it is stamped with the imprimatur of a Church or Bible although they would unhesitatingly reject it if proffered without religion's stamp.

How egregiously too, religious leaders, benumbed and bemused by their creed, play false with their followers! Such a one is our English Lord Halifax, who declared that the present war is a war for Christianity while, in the next breath, his colleagues declare it a war for freedom. Yet Christianity and mental freedom are inherently opposite things. A mentality shackled by Christian or any other religious dogma cannot be a free mentality and this surely is indubitable. We can despise the barren assertions and unreal sophistries of minds like that of Lord Halifax. A war for freedom (if there be such a thing) must be a war for the right of men to deny or espouse Christianity or any other religion just as each man may please.

Those mental slaves who are bound to Christianity or any other religion will hate and fear freedom of thought as most bodily slaves of ancient days hated and feared freedom of life. They hug their chains. "Nuns fret not at their convent's narrow room and hermits are contented in their cells." The caged bird is used to his wired confinement. Your canary will hardly survive in the open air. But there are others who, like the hero of Matthew Arnold's poem, escape from prison and "depart on the wide ocean of Life anew." What of each of them?

The pale Master, on his spar-strewn deck
With anguished face and flying hair
Grasping the rudder hard
Still bent to make some port he knows not where
Still standing for some false impossible shore.

He, too, must seek mental harbour. How passionate and recurrent is that ancient cry of the human spirit: "What Must I Do?" Under many forms: "What must I do to be saved?" or "What must I do to inherit Eternal Life?" or "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way?" or "How, then, shall men so order Life?" it is always the same cry in reality. It is a cry for certitude in a life where uncertainty is the only certitude; a cry for reassurance in

a universe of storm, stress and fear. It can be sensed in the new-born infant's first wail and in the death-rattle of the departing old man.

Then by what chart or compass or by what star shall the Freethinker steer? He has discarded and flung overboard the easy supernaturalisms of the enslaved. But he still has "the old unquiet breast." This is part of our common human heritage. By what shall he live? In what shall he believe?

There are not wanting many alternative non-religious philosophies. There is the service of mankind; as Winwood Reade put it: "To labour and love without hope of requital or reward: What religion could be more pure and more sublime?" There is the single-hearted pursuit of Beauty or Truth in any of their many forms, literary, scientific artistic, or musical. There is the chase of materialism in its many forms: complete absorption in a career, or money-making or other crude forms of aggrandisement. There is the fanatic devotion to some Cause, political, patriotic or economic. There is the modern vulgar immersion of one's life in rounds of half-meaningless social and committee activities. There is the refined physical epicureanism that is the civilized counterpart of the "eat and drink for to-morrow we die" attitude. There is the Stoic philosophy of Marcus Aurelius that well suits the nobler and sterner spirit, him who in Shakespeare's word is "more an antique Roman than a Dane." There is the repellent gospel of work for work's sake, suitable rather for termites than mankind. There is the quiescent cabbage-life of mere existence, of "laissez-aller" in which one passively accepts all that comes; there are the specialist doctrines of men who live for some mere activity. There is the enlightened service and development or one's self—the life of him, who, as Richard Burton said: "keeps his self-made laws." There is the related ideal of Walter Pater: "To burn always with a hard gem-like flame."

I suppose one could catalogue innumerable others. Most people, no doubt, forge for themselves as they go through life, personal philosophies which are compounds and compromises blending in varying degree, portions of divergent, and even contradictory academic philosophies, or religions. But such compounds and compromises are often devitalizing things.

Wordsworth has a pregnant phrase: "The human heart by which we live." It is no doubt the humanism, the milk of human-kind embedded in any religion or philosophy (however false or true) that gives its adherents sustenance and satisfaction. For we live more by emotion than by intellect.

And if you ask me: By what should a man live, and how shall he be "saved" or gain "eternal Life," or "cleanse his way," or "order his life," or the like, I, for my part, would say that it is for a man's own life, by a process of trial and error to teach him. Let him live by his own heart. Let him steer by the compass of himself on life's incognizable sea. "All other life is living death"—it seems to me. This is the strength and courage of women: that they seldom dare live in any other way than by their own hearts and womanhood. Men often patronizingly despise women for this peculiarity; but it is the truer way of living, after all, to "do what thy manhood bids thee do" rather than follow the artificialities of some abstract religious or philosophic system.

Who will teach us truly, not the Duty towards God nor the Duty towards my Neighbour, but the Duty towards Myself? Who will tell us boldly: "Be thine own Deus: do good for good is good to do, spurn bribe of Heaven or threat of Hell"? And who will tell us honestly that the riddle of life is not to be solved in spite of all the pretensions of saints and sages? Life is merely to be lived.

C. G. L. DU CANN

Simplifying Japanese

AMIDST all their preoccupations with war, the assiduous intellects of the rulers of Japan have not lost sight of, at any rate, some of the aspects of cultural progress. One question which they are tackling is a very difficult one: How can the language of their country be made easier to learn and to write?

The study of Japanese calls for the mastery of hundreds of often complicated Chinese "picture-signs" (ideographs): for Japanese originally was written entirely—and still is largely—in those characters derived from China.

The progressive modern spirit of Japan seeks, however, if not to do away with, at least to reduce to the smallest possible dimensions, the task involved in learning those signs. The characters taken over from China are very elaborate, and to learn them properly, it is needful to spend three times the effort called for in simpler languages. Further, the characters are not really suitable for the Japanese language, which, as spoken, is very different from the Chinese.

Chinese has no alphabet. Every picture-sign (ideograph) stands for one word, and has to be learned separately. The progressive Japanese people, then, seeks something easier and quicker.

One idea has been to write Japanese in a European ("Roman") alphabet. The difficulty here, however, is that many Japanese words, though having exactly the same sound, have as many as twenty or thirty (or even more) different meanings. For example, one sound ("koki") has these meanings: "An opportune time," "Fragrance," "Splendour," "School discipline," "Broad guage," "Curiosity," "Nobility," "School flag," "National affairs." The meanings are distinguished from one another in writing by each meaning having its own ideograph. If written in a European alphabet, sound and writing would both be the same, and confusion would result from the many different meanings.

As a means of overcoming the many difficulties, some reformers advocate even *improving the Japanese language itself*. How? By using the confusing words as seldom as possible, and replacing them by others. Most of them are derived from Chinese ideographs, and are retained merely out of traditional conservatism. If genuine Japanese words were used instead, in very many cases the confusion would vanish.

In the efforts for improving the writing of Japanese, the system called "Kana" has long existed, but has become more widespread in recent times. It is the use of a system of single sounds representing not single letters, but syllables: "bo," "ko," "ta," "ra," and so on. Newspapers are partly printed in that "syllabication," and partly in the old Chinese signs.

In due course, it is fairly certain, the Japanese educationalists will manage to evolve a simple system of writing, for, if there is one thing on which Japan is keen as regards internal economy, it is education.

While, however, the "syllabication" system is the most popular line of writing-reform, the advocates of "Romanization" (use of a European alphabet) are by no means silenced. The chief difficulty they have to face is the different sounds used by Europeans for similar letters. On May 28, 1932, Professor A. Tanakadate read before the Tokyo English-speaking Society, a paper on "The Romanization of Japanese Writing." He remarked that "there have been two lines of thought in adapting the 'Roman' letters to the Japanese language. One was to represent the Japanese sounds as nearly as possible after the style of each one of the languages into which Japanese sounds were transcribed. The other was to take over the 'Roman' letters into Japanese and make them our own."

Of these two methods, the first would lead to some confusion. The letters of European alphabets do not stand for the same sounds in all European languages. If a Dutchman wrote Japanese sounds according to the Dutch alphabet, the spelling would be different from that of a Frenchman or an Englishman.

In 1867 a learned European student of Japanese (Dr. Hepburn) published a Japanese-English Dictionary. It attempted to set up a system of spelling Japanese in "Roman" letters on a method which could be used by all

nations: but it was not entirely successful. As Professor Tanakadate says: "The Hepburn system, though criticized by Japanese and foreign scholars, such as Satow and Edkins, had a wide circulation, as it was the only book of the kind at the time, and the system came to be known under its author's name, and is extensively used in transcribing Japanese words, both at home and abroad." Attempts were made to improve on Hepburn's system—especially by two Japanese scholars, Baba-Tatui and Nisi-Amame. The former published in London, in 1873, an elementary Grammar of Japanese, and Nisi-Amame (who was thoroughgoing in his reformist ideas as to Japanese writing) proposed in 1874 a system of spelling of his own.

In 1884 a society called Romanjikwai was established to popularize (with some modifications) the Hepburn system. Differences of opinion arose, however, and the society died out. A similar fate overtook another: the Romanji Hiromekwai, formed in 1905. A later organization, however, the "Nippon Romazikwai," has published several large volumes and a periodical called the *Romazi Sekai*. Its aim is to establish a system of Romanized spelling suitable for universal writing of Japanese.

J. W. POYNTER

Acid Drops

When I say a thing three times it is so, might well be taken as a motto by most preachers of Christianity. Here, for instance, is a very common statement, often expressing no more than an error of judgment, but just as often representing a deliberate misrepresentation of the facts. It is taken from an address by the Rev. T. J. Morgan, of Burnley, Lancs. :—

The Church has passed unvanquished through all the world's persecutions, and will emerge stronger because of her trials and her travail. Voltaire caricatured her, Tom Paine sneered at her, and Robert Ingersoll ridiculed her. They have returned to the oblivion of the dust, but the Church lives on. All the forces of darkness have assailed her, ten thousand hands of sin have tried to extinguish her altar fires, but they will not be quenched.

Dynasties disappear and nations perish. There are changes in thought, in belief, in customs, but in the midst of all changes and conflicts the Church abides.

Now this is a first-class example of wishful speaking. Paine, Ingersoll and Voltaire have returned to the dust, and the Church is still here. Of course a Church is still here, but is it the Church against which Voltaire and Paine, or even Ingersoll fought? When Paine and Voltaire wrote, the Church—by which we mean all the Churches—believed in the literal inspiration of an infallible Bible. They believed in the historic hell which had brutalized the world for scores of generations. The age of the world and of man was measured by a mere six-thousand years. To question the Bible was to invite imprisonment or worse. Miracles were part of the stock belief of all Christian bodies, and non-Christians were outlawed. As to the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection from the dead no Christian believer thought of questioning their veracity. The list might be continued, but it is long enough to warrant one in asking "What has become of the Church that believes these things?" There are still numerous bodies who believe these things, but they stand in the Christian world as the rudiment of a tail reminds man of his animal ancestry. To say that the Church—the Church that Voltaire and Paine attacked—still lives is only true in the sense that the lower animals live on in the person of man. The Church lives on because it has lost the courage to live decently or die courageously.

What has been said of Paine and Voltaire may also be said of Ingersoll, and Bradlaugh, and many others of the Freethought Pioneers. There are, of course, still a large number of Christians who stand in the midst of the intellectual advance that has been made much as a raw native of Central Africa would stand out in modern London if he walked down Bond Street, in his native dress, and in his life behaved as did his brothers of the forest. But the ideas of Bradlaugh and Ingersoll are now being preached in scores of pulpits, printed in scores of books, and endorsed by large numbers of Christians, who would

shudder at being thought to be indebted to out and out Freethinkers, not merely for their advanced ideas, but for the possession of the civic freedom which enables them to express them in safety. The smallest number of our converts are to be found among self-conscious Freethinkers. The much larger number are still wearing the Christian label, unconscious of the source of their liberal ideas, and diluting them with the remnants of their original Christian superstition.

We understand that the crosses which are being blessed by Cardinal Hinsley for the protection of Roman Catholics during the war may also be worn by non-Catholics. Perhaps the Cardinal believes that in the confusion of an engagement the guardian angels who are out protecting Roman Catholics may not have the time to determine whether the wearer of the cross is a true blue follower of Hinsley, or a hard shell Presbyterian. But it looks like playing it low-down on the unwary angels.

We offer Cardinal Hinsley a challenge. Let him pick out 100 Roman Catholic soldiers and we will select 100 Freethinking ones. At the end of the war, after reckoning only those occasions on which the wearer of the crosses are in action, the proportion of survivors and injured are to be counted. The one whose party has the largest number of deaths and casualties shall be declared the loser and the side that has the fewest shall be declared the winner. The loser to pay fifty pounds to any institution or organization named by the winner.

We are glad to note that there appears to be a movement for providing suitably dignified buildings for Register Office marriages. We have called attention many times to the scandalously shabby rooms that are usually provided, and it does not require much insight to recognize that this is done deliberately. Those who are working for improvement in this matter might do well to stress the fact that the civil marriage is the only legal marriage. The religious service is of no greater legal consequence than is the colour of the bride's dress or the shape of the bridegroom's nose. Religious ceremonies of any kind may accompany the marriage ceremony, but that is all. For the purpose of marriage the minister of a church, established or nonconformist, is merely a person licensed to perform the civil ceremony.

The Rev. Stanley Morgan, Kent County Councillor, was recently interviewed by a representative of *Reynolds*. He and others are promoting a scheme for providing dignified and suitable places for the performance of the civil ceremony. He says that "in Kent we had a white-washed chicken-house used for an office. When complaint was made the registrar moved to a larger fowl-house." Mr. Morgan properly says that opposition to improvement is due to the fact that "it is the ecclesiastical attitude to discourage civil marriage." That goes to the root of the difficulty. First of all, the Church declared that only a Church was legal, and framed the civil law so that none other counted. At one time there were many thousands of children branded as illegitimate because their parents refused the religious ceremony. And when the law was altered, with the consequences of practically abolishing the legality of the religious marriage, the next step was the circulation of the religious lie that the civil ceremony did not constitute a proper (legal) marriage. There are vast numbers of Christians to-day who are still ignorant enough to believe that deliberate lie of the priest. If the Churches cannot capture the child before it is old enough to resist, control marriage and domineer at death, the game is nearly up. No one realizes this better than the priest, whatever be the cut of his robe.

One of the religious weeklies publishes a letter from a Church of England Army chaplain testifying to the "remarkable fellowship" existing between Anglican and Nonconformist army chaplains. It is a really remarkable thing, that after so many centuries preachers belonging to two different branches of the Christian world can meet without flying at each other's throats. The fact that it has taken only some eighteen or nineteen centuries for the representatives of different Christian sects to put up

with each other may be taken as irrefutable evidence that Christianity is based on love and good fellowship.

Here is a problem that Christians might save up for the winter evenings that are steadily approaching. If it takes, say, eighteen hundred years to get Christians to live together amicably—where their understandings of Christianity clash—how long will it be before "Christian love" dominates the world? In the intervals between throwing bombs at each other Christian soldiers might work out the problem.

Meanwhile those Christians interested might note that in the army, navy and air-force, men meet together, play together, fight together, and die together. The one thing they will not do is to pray together. The moment religion appears upon the scene the men divide into antagonistic groups, and if religious disputes were encouraged the men would soon be fighting each other. We fancy there is some sort of a moral in this situation.

The *Catholic Times*, August 23, contains a notice that, as these are the days of Raids and sudden death, every Catholic should make "a Catholic will." The will is to provide for three things. A clause ensuring that the children shall be brought up Roman Catholics, "recognition should be made of Roman Catholic Charities which would help their fellow Catholics," and arrangements made for "Masses for the repose of the souls of testators." This last provision is of "importance for those who are in a position to make suitable provision for Masses." "It is advisable to specify the amount for the offering for each Mass." That is a very business-like provision. No one can expect the same spiritual power behind a two and sixpenny Mass that will go along with a ten-shilling one. And a ten pound Mass would be still more influential. A fifty pound Mass would stand in the same relation to a half crown one that a sheet of tin foil would to the steel armour of a battleship. There must be some smart "business men" behind the Roman Church.

The same issue of the *Catholic Times* has some useful business hints on the purchase and care of "Altar wine." The process from grape to gullet must be carefully watched. "Grave risks" will be run if the wine is not bought from "a competent Catholic wine merchant." That kind of a person sees to it that the grapes are picked by Catholics only. The wine is poured into casks holding 115 gallons each. Later the wine "is examined by the delegate of the bishop of the diocese." There are a number of other regulations to ensure that the wine is to be turned into "the actual blood of Jesus," shall be real grape wine, and "of sufficiently high quality for its sacred purpose." That last provision must be of special consequence. Poor wine would, one may assume, be transformed into poor blood. And imagine a Catholic drinking obviously weak wine and beginning to suspect that the Lord had contracted anæmia.

By the way. We see recorded in this same issue of the *Catholic Times*, that there was some delay in delivering one consignment of these crosses because the factory in which the crosses are made was bombed "during several successive nights." That was a bad start for a series of miracles. One would, of course, expect that other factories would be bombed. But the one in which the crosses were being made! That is too much. Perhaps the explanation is that Hinsley forgot to bless the factory.

We suspect it is because of the intense bigotry existing in South Africa that there is a discontent—among Christian ministers. The military chiefs seem to think that chaplains are not necessary in the training camps. But we expect that presently the clergy in South Africa will follow the lead of their spiritual brethren in this country and agree to share the plunder rather than lose it altogether. One way and another there is a pretty sum paid to chaplains in the Army, Navy, Air-Force, prisons, workhouses and other public institutions. This "graft" has gone on very steadily, and no public character appears to have had the courage to deal with the subject. What a row there would be if some Member of Parliament raised the question.

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THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

To Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—A. O'Keefe, 38.

S. H. WILLIAMS.—We are not aware how much the sanctified wafer distributed in Church weighs. In olden days it possessed some very miraculous qualities. Sometimes it shed blood when handled by a blasphemer. Sometimes it remained unburned when cast into a fire. Sometimes it choked a Christian who tried to swallow it after doing an ill-deed. Sometimes it choked a Christian who had sworn a lie. Testing the truth in this manner was risky, it might have emptied the Church.

E. P. CONWAY.—Sorry you think the title to our "Views and Opinions" of Aug. 18, "Christian Truth," is offensive because it implies that it is equal to a lie. We don't like to offend anyone, so we will put it in another way. Christian truth is something that would resemble truth in general, if truth in general represented something else. That is the best we can do without running the risk of being called a liar. But we do not like to hurt the feelings of anyone.

G. E. RAW.—A speaker can be said to be one of the speakers of the National Secular Society when he is authorized to represent either a Branch of the Society or the General Executive, and then only so far as his warrant to speak extends. But we find it difficult to believe that anyone speaking as a Freethinker could say that he had seen a copy of the warrant ordering the crucifixion of Jesus, and that he accepted it as genuine. The speaker was probably illustrating the facility of the Christian Church in manufacturing documents in support of its claims. There have been hundreds of such documents.

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.

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When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

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

Sugar Plums

We have received the following from the editor of the *Listener* in reply to our paragraph in our issue for August 18, dealing with the scandal of Lord Halifax's speech:—

My attention has been drawn to the paragraph on p. 519 of your issue of August 18, in which a note criticizing Lord Halifax's recent broadcast is quoted as having been written in the *Listener* by "one of the *Listener* staff." The paragraph goes on to say that "the B.B.C. must have had a nice avalanche of letters of protest to be driven to speak thus of the Minister for Foreign Affairs." The note in question was written not by a member of the *Listener* staff but by Mr. W. E. Williams, an independent critic of the spoken word, who contributes a weekly article to our paper. The views that Mr. Williams expresses are his own, and he receives no kind of prompting from the

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 newsgagents. 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

B.B.C. on the line he is to take. There is, therefore, no question of his having been driven to say what he did "by a nice avalanche of letters of protest."

May I add that Mr. Williams's weekly article is signed with his own name and appears with other articles, dealing with broadcast drama and music, under the title "The Critic on the Hearth."

We regret that we should have erred in counting Mr. Williams as one of the staff of the *Listener*, although, as he contributes a weekly article, the error does not appear to be a very serious one. We take it that the editor wishes to remove any suspicion that he officially disagreed with any reproof of Lord Halifax for wrongly using an official position to advocate a peculiarly crude form of religious observance. On that matter we do regret that we should have attributed to the *Listener* a sense of fairness where religion is concerned that is quite foreign to the B.B.C., and which it evidently desires to repudiate. Mr. Williams will perhaps remember in the future that it is part of the policy of the B.B.C. to guard Christianity against attack, and to promote Christianity as much as is possible. The shadow of that prize bigot, Sir John Reith, still hangs over the B.B.C.

We are pleased to be able to report that we have recently enabled some of the men in the fighting forces to have their description of themselves as Atheist, or Freethinker, properly entered on their record and identity disc. This is, of course, no more than their legal rights. In one of these cases a revision has been made where there has been a change of opinion since joining. We shall be pleased to give any advice asked for, but if we are to take the matter up with the authorities, the parties concerned must consent to our supplying their names and situation. It would be an eye-opener to many if all non-Christians insisted upon a proper entry in the official records. It would be a good reply to the claim that this war is waged for the preservation of Christianity, and it might lead even to the abolition of the much disliked Church parade. That ceremony is quite out of place in a modern democratic army.

We wish to call the attention of our readers to the existence of the Benevolent Fund of the National Secular Society. This fund is intended for those Freethinkers who are in need of assistance, and who, because they are Freethinkers, are often shut out of help that would be given if other avenues of assistance were open to them. There are no costs of administration. That is in the hands of the members of the N.S.S. Executive. At present the Benevolent Fund is in debt to the General Fund of the Society, and it should be said that no genuine appeal for help is ever turned down. But it would be well for the Fund to pay its way, and we warmly commend it to our readers. Gifts of clothing are also acceptable. All letters should be addressed to the General Secretary, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and all gifts will be acknowledged by both an official receipt and in the *Freethinker*.

"La Folie de Jesus"

II.

UNLIKE many other biographers of Jesus, Dr. Binet-Sanglé devotes some space to Mary and Joseph, both of whom are, he contends, more or less accurately described in the canonical as well as in the apochryphal gospels. To complete his picture, he quotes extensively from Edmond Stapfer's work *Jesus Christ Before His Ministry* (1896), which gives details of how they were dressed, and how they went about their daily work. Both Stapfer and Binet-Sanglé have no doubt whatever that Nazareth existed in the days of Jesus, and we are given a description of the village as it is at this day to prove that it was very much the same then; even a description of the service in the modern synagogue is put forward as what probably took place nearly 2,000 years ago. One can only marvel at the famous psychologist's charming naïvete.

All these chapters are literally besprinkled with the well known words "without doubt"—which are so often met with in biographies of Jesus. It is almost certain that all they mean in the author's mind is *absolute* doubt, for, of course, no one knows anything whatever about Jesus or Mary or Joseph.

At the same time, if the words of Jesus are accepted as authentic, they certainly give in many cases quite a different idea of his Godship than we get from our pulpits. His cheeky replies as a youngster to his mother, and the fact that his parents did not understand him, are proof to Binet-Sanglé that, like many degenerates, Jesus had no filial affection. In fact, it is owing to the complete indifference shown by Jesus for Mary—he never addresses a kind word to her in the Gospels—that the doctor accounts for the cursory way in which the Apostles treated the "Mother of God."

James (or Jacob), the "brother of the Lord," is also described lengthily, and shown to be like Jesus "psychopathic," both religious lunatics quite easily recognized as such thanks to the labours of eminent medical men and psychologists. Binet-Sanglé gives many case-histories of similar combinations of brothers, and the way in which religious epidemics spread; and even how often very pious mothers give birth to children who become religiously insane.

From the accounts given by the Evangelists, the doctor chooses certain episodes to support his thesis. For example, the famous "Transfiguration" he insists is simply an attack of ecstacy or catalepsy or a manifestation of hysteria, and it generally follows fervent prayer as proved in cases like that of Catherine of Sienna. The fact that Jesus drank with the "publicans," and from time to time fasted, are all symptoms of attacks of religious lunacy; while religious "anguish," and the sweating of blood, confirm the diagnosis. To this one must add the stories of "stigmatics"—those people who have wounds on their hands and feet as if they had been crucified.

Binet-Sanglé goes minutely into the story of the Crucifixion, and shows, as have other writers, that the unlucky people who have been crucified in the past almost invariably take days to die; he is therefore obliged to go into medical details why, according to the accounts which he claims are authentic, Jesus died in a few hours. It is not a little amusing to find the Gospels are triumphantly quoted whenever they agree with him; and when they do not exactly, he gives minute details from medical books to prove that the Evangelists are after all right. His conclusion in the first volume is:—

The degenerate Jesus, about thirty-three years old, attacked by religious mania which had for some

time taken the form of melancholia, and which therefore kept him in a state of sadness and fear, leading the life of a vagabond, always on the run from the authorities, tiring himself out through preaching and wandering about, living on alms and sleeping often in the open fields, was attacked towards the end of his life by a pleurisy, actually tubercular with effusion.

In dealing with the sayings of Jesus, Binet-Sanglé shows the sources available, and how the religious ideas for which Christianity is supposed to be unique, were the direct outcome of Judaism plus religious mania. The Gospel writers proved their sincerity because the sayings attributed to their god can be traced directly to known documents which he knew. It does not appear that Binet-Sanglé ever thought for a moment that when the Evangelists were composing the Gospels, that they had various Jewish writings in front of them, and that they thus deliberately put in the mouth of Jesus quotations which were quite obviously taken direct from those writings. That is how the "prophecies" were worked, and the proof that this is so is shown by the fact that a number of these is due to the Gospel writer completely misunderstanding the "prophecy." Even orthodox writers of the utmost saintliness have to admit this is the case with the famous "born of a virgin" story taken from Isaiah.

One could make many criticisms of *La Folie de Jesus*, but the author must be given credit for a great deal in his book of enormous value. Whole chapters are devoted to descriptions of religious mania and the insane ideas of many religious enthusiasts. The chapter dealing with the large number of Messiahs are entralling; there are accounts of the way in which believers mutilated themselves as advised by Jesus, and in many other ways, showing how almost everywhere religious maniacs follow the same technique. Their extraordinary likeness to one another is manifest as soon as one reads the details of their lives.

And this is where it is surely obvious Binet-Sanglé went wrong. He claimed that the Gospel writers just described what they saw, or thought they saw, in one unique personality. But on his own showing, the East must have been full of similar personalities. Monks, hermits, fakirs, itinerant preachers, seem to have abounded in great numbers. The Jewish religion must have produced thousands of "dissenters" calling themselves prophets, or "men of God," differing in innumerable ways from the orthodox types. But there were many other religions, such as that of Serapis, or Mithra, or Isis and Horus, too numerous to mention—each with its devotees mostly quite mad, men living on roots and barks, "crucifying the flesh" as they would say, or in caves, living on what disciples would bring them, or in the desert in some hole on the ground, or on a pillar surrounded by excrement. They were all "holy" men, and considered such by the poor illiterate tillers of the soil hypnotized by a "sanctity" they could never hope themselves to emulate.

Thus when the Gospel writers were trying to "humanize" their ideal, they had the material for depicting a Man of God surrounding them in bulk. To have described an ordinary man would have made the picture false. Only the mad religious enthusiast with his hatred or contempt for family ties, his spurning of orthodoxy, his re-interpretation of "truth," his fits of "ecstasy" and sweating of blood, his attacks on sinners—by which he generally meant people having a good time—only such a lunatic with his insistence on returning to life after being put to death, could have satisfied, not only the Evangelists themselves, but their immediate followers and those whom they wished to convert. In other words, had Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John given their hero any other

characteristics but those we see in so many of the similar kind of pious madmen even in our own day, they would have been false to their creed. It was not a question of naïvely describing a real unique personality who is now recognized by psychologists as having been insane. The exact truth is that the Gospel writers, surrounded as they were by thousands of them, could have done nothing else.

And this is where such a book as *La Folie de Jesus* is so valuable. I know of no work which is so thorough and so merciless in its description of religious lunacy in all its forms. I know of no writer who has so scathingly exposed Christianity and the religion of Jesus from the point of view of insanity. Any Christian reader, after having carefully read this massive study of religious mania, and who still contends that Jesus was the Son of God, should join in all haste his brothers in the Lord—the Arab dervish, the Hindu fakir, the African witch doctor, or the Catholic who wears a hair shirt. The ordinary civilized man is no company for him.

H. CUTNER

The Mind of the Chimpanzee

(Concluded from page 539)

We come next to the handling of forms in space. Can the ape re-arrange the lay-out of the field so that the objective is brought into position for capture?

A length of string lies outside the bars at an angle to the cage. Chica pulls at that end accessible to her in the cage. The food attached to the string does not budge, however, for there is a weight at the other extremity. By passing her end of the string along in the direction of the food she brings it to 90 degrees so that there is enough "slack" to draw the food in: this she does by weaving her hands in and out of the bars. After one stupidity, the after effect of a former genuine solution, Grande also did it, and later Rana, but with more difficulty. Sultan, however, was quickly successful. Tschego and Konsul failed, pulling only in the direction of the string.

Next, Tschego puts her arm over a high fence and fails to reach the fruit on the ground. With her stick she removes it to a point where the fence is lower, and thus gains the objective. Sultan similarly removed an object to where there was a hole in the fence, convenient for putting his arm through.

A banana is next placed in a three-sided drawer outside the cage, the open side being remote from the cage. The animal seeking to bring the object in with a stick finds an obstacle, therefore, both at 0 degree and 90 degrees. A very quiet newcomer, Nueva, after signs of distress, correctly pushed the fruit out of the open side (at 180 degrees, that is, away from the cage) and brought it to port. Subsequently she took the correct direction of 180 degrees before bringing the fruit up against the obstructing sides. When a movable three-sided board was substituted she intelligently pushed the whole obstruction aside, and drew in at 0 degrees.

Sultan in this experiment lifted the fruit 6 cm. over the edge at first, but after two months achieved a faultless curve at 180 degrees.

Chica had to have the assistance of the open side at about 135 degrees, and even then moved her own position towards the advantageous side, while Grande needed a 90 degrees side opening, though she later performed successfully with the open side away from the cage. Tercera, rather stupid and lazy in experiment, needed the side opening. Grande and Tschego showed rage, and the latter broke her stick in anger.

She eventually succeeded with a side opening, but when she changed hands with the stick this momentarily caused her to change direction. Rana was successful with the concession of a side opening, but forgot the solution at the second repetition.

Kohler's classification for this experiment was: Nueva, Sultan, Chica, Grande, Tercera, Tschego, Rana, and this would probably serve as a general classification for the whole of the tests; Nueva, though never in good health, was the only one to challenge Sultan's superiority, and was showing great promise right up to her expected but premature death.

In the experiment just dealt with, a child of two failed utterly and showed rage. Kohler estimated that a child of two was not as expert as Sultan (then aged four) in getting an object with a stick, but better than Rana and Tercera.

In the next test the ape needs a stick to poke out of the bars, but the stick is attached by a cord to a ring hanging on a nail in the wall: this prevents the stick being taken to the bars. To free the stick the ring must be taken off the nail.

Sultan, after chewing at the cord, finally saw the ring and the nail, which he tried to pull out. He broke this stick as an outlet for his emotion, but later quietly removed the ring in a true solution of the problem, after an effective examination. Grande, Chica, Tercera and Rana all failed, and tried to get the stick off the cord (a good error).

The experiment was improved by the substitution of a strong iron bar for the nail, and the cord was dispensed with, the stick being tied to the ring. Stimulated by competition, Grande, seeing the ring move, did the trick. Chica did it at once. Rana only learnt at long last after many chance slippings (not counted as true solutions); the solution came to her suddenly at the beginning of a test.

The objective is next placed in a basket and the latter suspended by its handle from a rod projecting outwards from the wall too high to reach by hand. By means of the stick the ape can glide the basket to the end of the rod, whence it falls. After giving the basket a beating with his stick, Sultan saw the correct solution. Grande began to build with boxes, but Kohler, the observer, removed her foundation when she went to fetch another box. The animal wailed in disappointment, but later solved the problem like Sultan.

The next problem shows a further stage of complexity. The ape is taken outside the cage and led round to the back of it, where, through a gap, he sees the objective inside the cage just under the gap and out of arm's reach. There is a stick at hand, attached by a rope to a tree trunk. Sultan, after one chance help, poked the stick through the opening and pushed the fruit to the other end of the cage (where the bars were) and rushed round to collect his prize. At the third test he pushed the object towards the bars only so far as to allow for the length of his arm when finally collecting—a labour-saving idea.

With a chance help Chica did it, but on the second test a rather amusing incident occurred. She was correctly moving the object away at 180 degrees when she was distracted by a noise outside (she appears to have been a "jumpy" creature), with the result that she resumed pulling at 0 degrees. When she went round to the bars to get the fruit she was, of course, surprised to find it at the back where she had just come from. She later, like Sultan, allowed for the length of her arm, and pushed only so far, but here her mistake was at first a too generous allowance for her arm's length. Rana hopelessly pulled at 0 degree, her favourite direction, all the time.

Nueva was the most successful in getting the crook end of a stick through the bars, succeeding purpose-

fully at the first try. Sultan only did it after practice, but repeated the solution after a lapse of two years. He quite failed to deal with a T shape, but at least tried to remove the crosspiece, whereas Chica had no ideas at all on the subject. After the two years, however, Sultan succeeded.

Set the problem of getting a ladder through, Chica and Grande were quite discouraged. Sultan, after making some genuine twists, "blinded" it through.

To do away with the confusing T shapes of the ladder the experiment is re-modelled. The objective has to be pushed out of a box with a rectangular gap, by means of a board. Sultan and Chica pushed and jammed with emotion the master, but finally got an approximate position. Kohler found that when forms became complicated the ape would proceed blindly.

Finally we may mention the memory tests. Kohler was hailed by the apes after an absence of six, and Sultan after an absence of four, months. Thirteen months after a particular experiment in the perception of size Grande and Chica chose correctly when tested, and Tercera chose correctly from two reddish-blue shades. Sultan and Grande succeeding after eighteen months. According to Gestalt psychology, no mental "image" is needed to explain memory; the same situation simply causes the same direction of choice-behaviour.

After half an hour, during which time he played, Sultan was released and went straight to the spot where he had seen a pear buried. He also, after one hour, recovered with a stick at $1\frac{1}{2}$ metres. At a time distance of $16\frac{1}{2}$ hours, the apes would remember an overnight burial and go to the approximate place, Grande here performing excellently.

We have seen the apes at work. It will now be equally instructive to watch them at play.

G. H. TAYLOR

Predestination

CALVIN. You've forgotten to put my revolvers in their holsters, Sambo.

Sambo. If Massa is predestinated to be shot, why should he carry revolvers?

Calvin. Your question is unanswerable, Sambo. But, on the other hand, if God predestinated me to shoot two or three Indians, how can I do it without my revolvers?

The Fates—the Furies—the Parcae—the Destinies—the Weird Sisters, were the three goddesses who presided over birth, life, and fortune.

Clotho held the distaff in her hands, from it Lachesis spun the thread of man's life, until Atropos, the inexorable, the inflexible—"the blind fury with the abhorred shears"—severed his thin spun life.

Predestination seems to have been an offspring of these furies, and its parents are still living.

Comments made after a recent air-raid show that fate, prayer, and predestination all played a part in it. The fatalist let determined things to destiny hold unbewailed their way—it was kismet! The prayerful, in many cases, only prayed and left the result to God. The Predestinarian believed that events could only happen as foreseen by God before the foundation of the world.

So, at the warning sound of the siren to take cover, fatalist, prayerful, and predestinarian, alike, rushed into the open street as though expecting to see the Second Coming of Christ!

"If God foresees events, he must have predetermined them." (Hale: *Origin of Mankind*).

To Hale, God was omniscient—all seeing! He be-

lieved in the testimony of Acts ii. 22; xv. 18; Romans viii. 29-30; ix. 11-23; Eph. i. 4, 5, 11; iii. 11; 2 Thes. ii. 13. Some there are who think that God is powerless to interfere with the course of events. But Scripture credits him with Omnipotence and Omniscience.

Why did he not see all things happen differently? What shall we say then? Is there unrighteousness with God? To be craven hearted is to answer like Paul—God forbid! But truth is greater than all the Gods that the world has yet seen. Let us, therefore, have truth though the heavens should fall, and courage "to look the Omnipotent tyrant in his everlasting face and tell him that His evil is not good!"

I shall never forget how Rom. ix. 11—"For the children being not yet born, neither having done any good or evil, that the purpose of God through election might stand, etc."—haunted me in my childhood.

God moves in a *mischievous* way his blunders to perform! He would have made a poor living in the Potteries. Fines for numberless half-baked pots, vessels leaning all awry, undersized and oversized, etc., would have singled him out as an incompetent, and dishonoured craftsman—an almighty failure!

Calvin was one of the few theologians swayed by logic. He gave us the five points of Calvinism, which are fairly consistent:—

- (1) Particular election. (The election of particular individuals to eternal life.)
- (2) Particular redemption. (Redemption of particular persons.)
- (3) Moral inability in a fallen state. (Inability innate, irremediable.)
- (4) Irresistible grace. (For the Elect!)
- (5) Final perseverance. (Of the Elect!)

The Arminians disagreed with these points and they submitted five which they thought provided a means of escape for man. These points are weaker, logically, than Calvin's:—

- (1) That God from all eternity predestinated to eternal life those who he foresaw would have permanent faith in Christ.
- (2) That Christ died for all mankind, and not simply for the elect. (But why die for those who came under the sentence of God's predestination—damnation?)
- (3) That man requires regeneration by the holy spirit.
- (4) That man may resist divine grace.
- (5) That man may fall from divine grace.

Says Bishop Burnet (1643-1715) "The Calvinist is tempted to a false security and sloth; and the Arminian may be tempted to trust too much to himself, and too little to God." *Exp. of the Articles, Art. 17.*

But the Bishop would agree that "the godly consideration of Predestination, and our election in Christ, is full of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable comfort to Godly persons!" (Art. 17.)

Calvin thought he had found a Protestant in Rabelais, and was prepared to number him with his disciples. Calvin, however gravely censured him for his profane jesting, and Rabelais, in revenge, made one of his leading characters—Panurge—discourse in Calvinistic phrases, until Calvin began to look upon him as an enemy. "This fellow," said he to Luther, "is throwing stones into our garden too, he must be silenced." He murdered—effectively silenced!—Servetus, but he couldn't silence Rabelais.

Calvin's dictatorship in Geneva makes provoking reading. "Sweet mercy is nobility's true badge." His rule in Geneva was void of mercy. He had no sense of humour, otherwise he would have "laughed himself all mortal daily," at his consistory courts. Knox (also without a sense of humour) thought Calvin's Geneva "the most perfect school of Christ that ever was in the earth since the days of the apostles."

Calvin was the author of a very remarkable book: "A very profitable Treatise, made by Mr. Jhon Calvyne, declarynge what great profit might come to al Christendom, yf there was a register made of Sainctes Bodies, and other Reliques." (Printed in 1561).

Calvin had seen, besides other remarkable things, fragments of the true cross that would load a large ship; the manger in which Christ was laid; the cloth in which he was wrapped when he was born; his cradle; and the little shirt made for him by his mother; etc.

And here is an abbreviated story: "But," said the tourist—"The skull of John the Baptist was shown to me yesterday in the monastery of —."

"True," said the monastic exhibitor, "but those monks only possess the skull of the saint when he was a young man. Ours is his skull when he was advanced in wisdom."

This book is chock full of quotable passages to suit every taste.

Luther, after the Reformation, significantly joined the German princes. His Devils in Worms, on rooftiles and elsewhere, were only imps, which, in the economic interests of the Deutsch God Mammon needed removing.

Luther was a strong man, and he made an important step forward. But to his own age he, doubtless, seemed greater than he does to some of us to-day. He did not go, theologically, far enough for Calvin and Knox—his tenet of Consubstantiation being too near Transubstantiation for their liking. To Luther, though no material change had taken place in the bread and wine yet was the taste of the Lord's body discernible in it. To Calvin and Knox, bread and wine were only symbols.

To Rabelais bread and wine were gifts of the gods, things to sweeten life here and now—to make glad the heart of man! He had a "jollity of mind pickled in the scorn of fortune," and a heart loving mankind, with a passionate desire for the establishment of truth and justice which sustained him for 70 years.

To Calvin: "So long as God shall live, so long shall the damned die." (Perish everlastingly). Such cheerful, comforting thoughts could not for long sustain a great, little man like Calvin. He died when 55 years of age, and his body became like unto what his heart had all his life been—a stone!

Rabelais filled the world with laughter.

Calvin filled it with tears.

GEORGE WALLACE

Goal-Seeking

This is a term frequently used by Prof. Wm. McDougall in a book I have recently read, *The Riddle of Life*. Goal-seeking, of course, implies a teleological view of the nature of Causation, as opposed to a mechanistic one. Many of the writers and readers to the *Freethinker* will be interested in the truth or otherwise of the two claims. For my part I find it difficult to decide—not being an expert—but perhaps Mr. G. Taylor—or some other learned exponent may be able to clear-up the puzzle.

Mr. Taylor often refers to McDougall, who seems to have a preference for the "teleological" explanation. Whether the Professor is still carrying about the "ghost of a god"—to quote our worthy Editor—or not, I cannot tell, but he seems to take special pleasure in decrying the sufficiency of the merely "mechanistic." He reviews, sometimes favourably, and sometimes quite the reverse, the various philosophies of many of our famous scientists, but I notice

he reserves the vials of his wrath for those who defend the "mechanistic," especially is his animus directed against Prof. Hogben.

One must admit that McDougall, in this book, gives an excellent account of the various views set forth by our leading men of science. Such as the "Gestalt" theory alluded to by Mr. Taylor recently; "Organicism," "Hylozoism," "Holism," are all critically dealt with. Themes such as "Biotic Energy," "Para-matter," "Super-matter," "Psycho-matter" are all gone into. Very learned and highly interesting accounts are given of these various "isms," but the conclusion arrived at would seem to be that we must admit the necessity of certain psychical qualities as teleological guiding influences. In the development of an organism, at the very basis of life itself, there are certain cells, or genes, or chromosomes which appear capable of deciding the best out of two possible courses. They have the faculty of "goal-seeking," which, of course, presupposes the "teleological argument."

Perhaps I ought to say that he favours a blend of the "dualists" and the "vitalistic." Towards the close of the book he says: "It is an advantage of the dualistic theory, especially combined with monadism, that it makes intelligible the existence of individuals or persons higher than and more comprehensive than ourselves, the whole of which we are subordinate members, and in the lives of which we may play some part without being aware of the fact. This is advantageous for two reasons. First, ethically and religiously; because it gives us a glimpse of an intelligible possibility of the continuance of the activity of each one of us beyond death of the body, and hence of the continuing influence of whatever of positive value in our personalities may have accrued from our individual efforts."

"Secondly, scientifically an advantage because there are indications of the realities of such individuals who have effect morally, aesthetically, religiously; and there are vague indications of a purely biological kind which may prove far richer than at present appears. The Ammonites, the Trilobites, the great reptiles give striking instances, pointing to some large unity or community of nature underlying the separate individual organisms."

Well, all this may be optimistic enough, and, I suppose, we must read different sides to any suggestions put forward. Our Editor duly put in his place Mr. John Powys, recently in his hankering after an Oversoul which kept on probing with a sort of antennæ the various possibilities of both animate and inanimate life. In a book, *A Pagan Holiday*, his brother Llewelyn differs from John in his ideas concerning "Reality." I would say Llewelyn is the better Freethinker of the two. John must be still heavily weighted with that "ghost of a god."

May I just say that in his recent book our Editor has once more placed the N.S.S. in his debt. His style, method and matter are always so sensible, philosophic and lucid, that makes it a delight to read. Light, humorous touches here and there, interspersed with expositions of the weightiest kind proclaim him as a genuine guide, philosopher and friend. He seems to be able to differ with many of our recognized experts, "tell 'em off, so to speak, and make no bones about it." He has the faculty of expressing dissent and differences of opinion without sacrificing friendship or good-feeling. In fact these are enhanced and rightly so.

His first book was an "Outline of Evolutionary Ethics," which I remember reading in queer circumstances, so many years ago. I was on holiday, cycling to the Scottish Capital. Staying for a night at a hotel on Tweedside, the only room where I could rest after a long journey was the public dining-room.

A shooting-party were having dinner and they babbled of the days' sport, while I endeavoured to assimilate the "Outline." I expect I got as much satisfaction as they got from the days' 'untin'.

Mr. Cohen sparingly refers to a few of his encounters with the "enemy," and a sample of his retort courteous. As this is a kind of Salmagundi, may I recall a metaphor he once used on the edge of Newcastle Town Moor, on a Race-Sunday somewhere about 50 years ago. An old Presbyterian Minister—one of the kind which may justly be described as "stickit" would pester the speaker with irrelevant observations. He was a "canny old soul" too and eked-out a frugal living by filling the "poopit" whenever and wherever he had a chance. He was also willing to bury members of another sect for a reasonable fee. Mr. Cohen left him speechless when he pointed out that he used his hecklers as he would a telescope. "I take them up, draw them out, look through them, and shut them up."

Perhaps our Editor remembers another occasion at the same venue when another "crank" questioned his reference to a certain book. I fancy it was either Darwin or Spencer. He was quite sure he had quoted wrongly. He would produce the book and prove it. As he had a mile to go, the meeting was over before he returned. We lingered on till late, but he never put up an appearance. We got the benefit of the fresh air and the objector practised pedestrian exercise. These gatherings were extremely enjoyable and always popular. Happy times! "Wull ye no come back again"?

ALAN TYNDAL

Correspondence

CHRISTIAN LIES

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—On the subject of Christian lying, and the repetition of Christian lies by simple people, I was recently told by a neighbour that "the celebrated Atheist 'Bradshaw,' though he *rose* [*sic*] to be a Member of Parliament, called on God in his dying moments."

Some months ago a Christian said to me "you never find a Jew who is an Atheist."

I suppose they will be telling us next that you never find a religionist in a lunatic asylum!

ROBERT HARDING

THE RACIAL MYTH

SIR,—As one of those who procure their weekly copy of the *Freethinker* through a newsagent, may I be allowed, please, to remark on your article "The Racial Myth."

If my memory serves me right, I think that if you turn to the *Freethinker* just before the War, you stated "The time is soon coming, if it has not already come, when the only decent thing that can be said about a German, is that he is a dead one." Later you stated in the Picton Hall, that you were not so much concerned with the War, as with the Peace, but why be concerned about peace with a people of whom the only decent thing to be said of them, is that they are dead?

Have all Germans become bad, just as all Russians became Atheist?

When it is a question of War or something worse, it should not be difficult for one to come to a decision! One may imagine a Christian saying that; also: What worse could there be than a people becoming Atheist.

While man (like Abraham), believes in the sacrifice, the gods will see to it that the circumstances are created to make him act in accordance with his beliefs.

L. BURNS

[Our comment was obviously concerned with what Germany might be if the present regime persisted long enough.—ED.]

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON AUGUST 22, 1940

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair. Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Rosetti (A. C.), Bryant, Preece, Seibert, Griffiths, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Quinton, Mrs. Buxton and the Secretary.

Minutes of the previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to the West London Branch and the Parent Society. Notice of a legacy of £200 under the will of the late Joseph Hughes of Altrincham to the N.S.S. was reported.

Correspondence from Liverpool, Bethnal Green Branches, Cambridge, and Mr. Brighton's report of successful lectures at Wigan were before the meeting. Preliminary suggestions for winter lectures were discussed.

It was agreed to meet on Sunday afternoons until further notice. The next meeting was fixed for Sunday, September 15, at 3 o'clock, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S.—Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 3.15, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, A Lecture. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, A Lecture.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Clapham Common): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury, Brockwell Park, 3.30, Mrs. N. B. Buxton.

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

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. Laycock's Café, Kirkgate): 7.15, Mr. Stewart Wishart.

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

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

DARLINGTON (Market Steps): 7.0, Sunday Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Clarion Rooms, Wellington Street): 7.0, Executive Meeting. Friends and members welcome. Literature on sale.

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

WHEATLEY LANE: 7.30, Thursday, Mr. J. Clayton.

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

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