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Views and Opinions

A Religious Slander

SOMEONE, I forget whom, defined man as a religious animal. Then someone else elaborated the definition by saying that man is an *essentially* religious animal. The first form of the definition was a libel on the human race. Its elaboration made the definition calumnious, and if there existed a high court of the universe, each of the parties concerned deserved prosecution for defamation of character. To say that man is an animal, even the only animal, that contracts religion may be true in the light of ascertained facts. It would be no more than saying that man is an animal that contracts or develops some unpleasant disease. But to say that man is essentially religious—that is, he would not be man without a religion—is an insult so comprehensive that no repudiation, no collocation of mere words can do justice to one's feelings. It saddles the whole human race, past, present and to come, with a limitless capacity for gratuitous misunderstanding, a misunderstanding that history proves to have been overwhelmingly evil in its consequences. Any man of feeling and imagination might well reply as did the old lady when first given in very graphic language an account of the sufferings of Jesus Christ, "Well, well, it is a terrible story, let's hope it isn't true."

* * *

Man and His Gods

The worst feature of this universal libel on human nature is that it is quite gratuitous in theory. "Essential" means the existence of something necessary to the thing before us. But it is quite obvious that belief in religion does not come under that head. There are increasing millions of men and women in the world who have no use whatever for ghosts and gods and spirits or supernaturalism in any of its fantastic forms. "Inevitable" is a much better word than "essential," because it is in closer conformity to the facts. This merely says that given a certain set of circumstances a predictable consequence will follow. And it must be granted that developing human nature being what it was the belief in "spirits" as the ruling forces in the world was inevitable. Probably if one could get at what a dog feels concerning the powers of man, or, better still, if we could contact with the mentality of an ape we might get a perfect appreciation of the conditions which caused man to populate the universe with myriads of "spiritual" beings that made a mere sport of the human race. Yet I do not know that even this would "fill the bill," for anthropologists are fairly well agreed in the conviction that there was a preanimistic stage in which there existed a no more definite form of religion than that of a vague kind of "force" with which man had to keep on good terms if he was to get the best out of life.

Personification of this primitive force takes place later. Man fashioned gods in his own image, but never, or hardly ever, as Gilbert would have said, worked according to the best samples of humanity. For it very seldom happens that there are not some men who are better than the gods they worship. Were it otherwise the gods would never show an improvement at any time. The Bible god, for instance, would never have become the benevolent "father statesman" that he is at present. What the gods in all ages have desired is obedience and worship. On these two things they have lived and flourished. Bible readers will recall the satisfaction of God when he "smelled a sweet savour of sacrifice." It was part of the daily ration without which no god can exist for long. And they are as avid about this ration to-day as they ever were. They will do nothing without it because they can be nothing without it. All the gods the world has ever known have depended for existence upon the nourishment provided in prayer and sacrifice. When these were not forthcoming they faded into nothingness. It is the same story to-day. The priests of all the religions tell us that their god will help us in the war if we pray and praise God; tell him that we are weak and miserable creatures (this information is not, of course, for Hitler. He gets a very different story), and if we offer God the present of a contrite heart (if a benumbed head goes with it so much the better), then he will certainly help. But one must note that this appeal goes with a concealed threat. For we also inform God that we are fighting his fight, that if Germany wins Jehovah will have to give way to some of the old Teutonic deities. We are fighting for him. This is a totalitarian war for gods as well as for mortals, and British worshippers expect God to do his bit and to play the part of a real ally. The Churches are giving God notice, and neutrals have the last opportunity of saving themselves.

* * *

Our Fatal Heritage

In terms of prevailing conditions the arrival of the gods was, as I have already said, inevitable. But their enthronement involved a terrible loss of time and the gods became an unmitigated nuisance. Man has but one way of learning—by the hard road of experience—and that means delay and endless frustration. Early experience suggested nearly everything that was wrong, and little that was right. A flat earth, a solid sky, a world populated with good and evil spirits—with an overdose of the latter—health and disease, good and bad fortune, everything under the control of supernatural agents, each as hungry for bribery as a waiter is for a substantial tip. Hundreds of thousands of generations had to pass before man was able to take an approximately accurate conception of the nature of the forces around him. And at every step of that development he found the gods stubbornly contesting each step of mankind's upward road. Even then the gods left behind them the marks of their long and drastic overlordship. For as the liberated serf is apt to show his freedom in acts of self-assertiveness, a mental trait that springs from his long-borne slavery, so in the mental make-up of the men and women of to-day is to be found the hundred and one petty superstitions that exist as unmistakable evidence of humanity's earlier history. Religion was not essential to human nature, but it was inevit-

able. And that inevitability involved humanity's greatest blunder and the seed-plot of some of humanity's greatest crimes.

* * *

A Final Protest

I have space for but a brief note on another topic, which in itself will serve to illustrate the truth of what I have said concerning the evil heritage of religion. Human nature has its ugly side, but it also has an admirable one, and I wish to make a protest against the slanders that Christian writers and preachers cast upon the whole human race. If this slander was voiced by evangelical preachers only, one might smile and let it pass. They preach the simple and absurd doctrine that man is filled with sinful leanings, and can only do good by the aid of Jesus Christ. But when we find men such as the Archbishop of York endorsing the crude statement that there is no basis for human morality save in the belief in God, we begin to realize what an essentially *de-moralizing* factor religion is in both theory and practice. I do not claim that these wholesale slanders are not in tune with Christianity, I affirm it. A profound distrust in human nature is one of its essential features. The whole scheme of salvation is built upon it. From the very outset Christianity has denied the possibility of human decency without supernatural enforcement. The only reason for the Christian mythology is that man is essentially vile, that "in Adam all men die"—morally and spiritually, and only in the miracle of the crucifixion can he be made alive. What the old Puritans called the rags of human morality are counted as evil tendencies if it lacks the supernaturalism of the Cross. When the Christian praises human nature it is not human nature in itself that he has in mind, but human nature enforced and controlled by Christian supernaturalism. It is not surprising that so brilliant a writer as Edgar Saltus should have placed Christianity among pessimistic systems. It is, however, a compliment so to place it. For the pessimism of Indian and European origin is at least a result of a considered analysis of man, and may claim to come within the ranks of philosophical speculations. But the Christian denial of human nature, as such, being capable of the higher flights of existence is built on a revival of the most primitive human superstitions. It was literally a return to the wild.

Fortunately for the human species—or that portion of it that came within the control of the Church—it is only a few who have been able to live up to the unintelligent theological pessimism of the Christian religion. When the Christian in Church hears of the essential vileness of human nature he diverts the application of the lesson and gratifies his own vanity by "passing the buck" on to others. When the preacher explains that man by himself can do nothing right without the conscious or unconscious acceptance of the existence of God and the freely given sacrifice of Jesus, each hearer thinks of the Christian on the seat behind him, and of the Christian on the seat in front of him, but never of the Christian who sits on the seat between the two. Christianity is a delightful creed, based upon the assumption that all men are potential criminals, who would become actively such if they were not held in check by the belief in an almighty policeman who never sleeps and who cannot be bribed—save through the properly appointed official agencies.

So I enter my protest against two things. First, against the slander that man is essentially a religious animal. He is an animal that is liable to contract religion, so liable that in the course of his racial development he has generally managed to contract it, just as he has usually contracted certain physical diseases in his passage from infancy to manhood. But I do not libel mankind by denying that all men at all times must pass through that stage of intellectual inma-

turity represented by belief in the supernatural. The evidence for my protest and for my belief can be found in any civilized population. A much larger body of evidence can also be found among the same population for the persistence of primitive ideas of gods and devils and spirits and a never-never land.

I reject also, as being the greatest slander of all, the teaching that is now gaining prominence in cultured Christian circles that morals can carry no authority without the supposition—made consciously or unconsciously—of the existence of a god. That is the greatest superstition of them all. And the fact of it is now being revived by some of the cultured leaders of the Christian Church, forces one to revise one's opinion concerning the honesty of these preachers.

CHAPMAN COHEN

A Haunt of Ancient Peace

CHARING CROSS ROAD, LONDON, is the Mecca of all lovers of books. There was, however, an earlier place of pilgrimage in the Metropolis, whose passing was a matter of keen regret to its many thousands of votaries. Booksellers' Row, Strand, London, was a short thoroughfare in the shadow of St. Mary-le-Strand and Clements Dane Churches. A few yards away from the Strand, it was singularly free from vehicular traffic. Most of the shops were booksellers, hence its name, but there was a high-class tailor, a jeweller, a fruiterer, and a public-house at the eastern end.

The booksellers were of all kinds, ranging from the "fourpenny boxers" to publishers of repute, the latter including educational establishments, whilst Ridler's dealt with black letter books and old folios and quartos. At the western entrance was Denny's, a live up-to-date new bookseller with one of the smartest staffs in all London. The remaining score of shopkeepers had huge stocks of books, and between them covered the whole range of literature. Indeed, you could buy almost anything literary in the Row from a work in Japanese art or Oriental music to a complete set of Dickens or Thackeray, or the *Encyclopædia Britannica* and the Sacred Books of the East.

The street was a magnet for booklovers the world over. Being so close to the Law Courts, judges, barristers, solicitors, were frequent visitors. Journalists and editors came almost daily, whilst "literary gents" loitered and lingered by the score. As a young bookworm myself I spent much of my daily lunch-time in this street, and got to know it well. At a later period I earned a few guineas in my spare time by compiling booksellers' catalogues, which were issued at frequent intervals.

Book-hunters are a curious race, and come from all social grades. At one end there will be found princes and millionaires, and at the other poor students; the only bond between them being a common love of literature. Tastes vary, too, for men collect books for a variety of reasons. Prince Lucien Bonaparte, for example, sought books on dialect in all corners of the globe, and at his death had a wonderful library of works on linguistics. Another celebrity, such as Pierpont Morgan, sought assiduously for first editions of famous authors, and actually helped to force the price up of books he wanted.

Moncure Conway made a speciality of collecting books and pamphlets on Thomas Paine the material of which he used in the preparation of his monumental biography of that great man. Other men purchased early examples of printing, and beautifully bound volumes. King Edward VII. belonged to the latter category. He always judged books by their covers. A very famous brain specialist bought thousands of books simply for the portraits of famous men and women, so that he could get data for his work. Some

enthusiasts collect books on Napoleon, and others volumes on Arctic and Antarctic exploration, and other out-of-the-way subjects. A schoolmaster named Wolf had a houseful of books on Shakespeare, numbering thousands of volumes and pamphlets, no magazine or periodical containing articles on Shakespeare was too insignificant for his notice.

Gladstone was an assiduous book-hunter, and when pressed for time used to change into evening dress in the back room of a friendly bookseller. Herman Vezin, the famous actor, was a voracious reader, and almost daily bought books. Frederick Burgess, one of the partners of the world-famous Nigger Minstrel Troupe, haunted the sale-rooms and bookshops. He rebound his purchases in handsome calf bindings, with gilt edges, and reduced their value, as collectors preferred literary rarities in their original forms. His partner, "Pony" Moore, was not so literary. His reading, I believe, was restricted to the *Racing Calendar*, *Form at a Glance*, and a medical work on *Gout in the Stomach*. Sir Henry Irving bought books with theatrical associations, but he did not frequent the shops. The articles had to be taken to the Lyceum Theatre or to his West-End flat for his inspection. But few actors were literary in the old days. I once asked an old player, who had been acting in Shakespeare's plays and the "classics" for half a century, what he considered to be the finest piece of poetry he had ever declaimed. He said Claude Melnotte's long soliloquy on the *Lady of Lyons*. I do not blame him for liking to have the stage to himself for twenty minutes on end. The actresses were very innocent of literature. I doubt if some of them knew there was such a word. Anyhow, I never met one in a second-hand bookseller's shop, and only a few in the new book emporiums, buying novels.

William Morris, John Davidson, Richard Le Gallienne, Robert Buchanan, and a host of other poets were assiduous book buyers. "Tay Pay" O'Connor used to drive up in a hansom cab with a load of review books which he used to hawk from shop to shop. For the booksellers knew from bitter experience that he used to pull the pages from the books and paste them on his manuscript instead of copying out the passages. I have seen Mark Twain and Thomas Hardy standing near one another at the same shop without recognition. Few gave glances at the tall, quiet, reserved man who said so little but was the very prince of jesters; and no one recognized Hardy in the shy little man with diffident manner. Judge Willis was a character with a distinct personality, for he had a pleasant habit of declaiming passages from his favourite authors, much to the amusement of the shop assistants. Joe Wheeler of the *Freethinker* haunted the street, as he did other bookish resorts. He used to declare, with a chuckle, that his price for a book was sixpence, but he had a well-stocked library of his own. G. W. Foote was a discriminating booklover, and had a manner with him. Once, on leaving the Press Restaurant, in his company, the waiter asked me "Is your friend on the music-halls?" Foote laughed merrily when I told him. He had a keen eye for a bargain, too. One day he found a copy of Fitzgerald's *Polonius* in a sixpenny box, and sold it to another bookseller in the road for eight guineas. But he was far too busy a man to dabble in bookselling. He loved books for their own sakes. In recording his impressions in so many delightful pages he proved himself a critic of the first magnitude.

So, one might ramble on concerning Booksellers Row and its frequenters. Dear, hospitable street! It was a rendezvous and not merely a thoroughfare, and thousands of booklovers the world over thought wistfully of its passing on that autumn day in 1903. Its modern successor in central London's roar has neither the same intimacy nor the same comradeship. The old booksellers and their customers were a society of

friends. Both loved literature, and did it honour. I recall that one bookseller had a visit from a luxury-flat owner, who ordered a number of books. The fellow actually wanted the volumes bound to match the furniture, and "thought books were like bricks," complained the bookseller, with honest indignation. To him, and to his like, books were far more than mere merchandise. Great books were "jewels, that, on the stretched forefinger of Time, sparkled for ever."

MIMNERMUS

The Life and Labours of Luther Burbank

THE remarkably gifted New England naturalist, Luther Burbank, is still the most prolific and astounding artificer of novel forms of plant life that the world has ever known. Burbank's loyal biographer, Wilbur Hall assures us that, given a longer life, the great plant creator would have devoted his latter days to the composition of elaborate accounts of the painstaking and persevering experimental researches which made possible his achievements in the botanical realm. All that survives this projected and partly undertaken labour is restricted to Burbank's autobiography: *An Architect of Nature* (Watts, 1s. 3d., 1939). Yet, however much we may regret this loss, there is sufficient in this delightful booklet to clearly illustrate the multifarious character of his undertakings, dominated, as they were, by a consistently rational outlook on life.

Wilbur Hall apparently collaborated with Burbank in composing this idiomatic autobiography which preserves the vernacular usually employed by the plant-breeder in conversation. Still, this piece of writing possesses many passages of abiding beauty and, whatever defects the ultra-critical may detect, this working naturalist's very dearly-held convictions are expressed in the clearest language.

When Burbank claimed that he had produced "New Creations in Fruits and Flowers," pious people were deeply shocked, and there arose a cry of horror and indignation. The blaspheming Burbank was solemnly and severely admonished as well as vilified. As he himself says: "I was preached about, talked at, written, telegraphed, scolded, abused and even vilified: the more extreme of my critics said I was setting myself up as a competitor of Omnipotence. . . . One preacher inveigled me into his church, had me seated in a front pew, and then worked up a trap for me by which I had to say just what I believed as to the truth of natural laws behind all life, and what I disbelieved as to the truth of metaphysical and superstitious theories concerning creation." And when Burbank was completely at the preacher's mercy a prayer was offered up for the sinner's repentant awakening.

Hall tells us that immediately Burbank had delivered a plain-spoken address in a San Francisco conventicle, thousands of congratulatory communications were sent him from thoughtful and emancipated people in the States and elsewhere. But hatred and vindictiveness were glaringly exhibited by the bigoted and fanatical. Still, in the simplicity of his heart, Burbank vainly imagined that friendliness and calm reasoning would conciliate or even convince his infuriated assailants. And one may wonder how many of those who had previously venerated the man and his works were reduced to icy silence by his frank confession of faith.

Burbank's sanguine endeavour to still the tempest entailed an enormous expenditure of energy, both physical and mental, and this, coinciding with the sinister activities of the Fundamentalist reactionaries, hastened his death. Now, despite Burbank's heterodoxy, as his biographer states, when his death was announced thousands of messages were sent to his sor-

rowing relatives from all parts of the globe expressing respect and affection for the departed philosopher. For, "Luther Burbank believed neither in heaven nor in hell, in the transmigration of souls nor the translation of the body."

Epoch-making as his achievements were, he led a simple and unostentatious life, and his burial harmonized with this. Hall records this last service as follows: "We laid Luther Burbank to rest under the cedar in the yard of the old homestead in which he had lived for forty years, and on the grounds of which he did most of his incalculably valuable work for his fellow men."

When evolving the many modified and improved plant forms for which he is famous, Burbank persistently proceeded on the principle that heredity is another name for transmitted environmental influences. By a system of trial and error he selected a few choice seeds for experimental purposes, and by the cultivation of every favourable variation displayed, Burbank evolved his spineless cactus, his famous potato and his rapidly growing and maturing trees bearing delicious fruits, superior nuts and splendid timber.

Burbank gratefully ascribes his intellectual awakening to the influence of Charles Darwin. *The Origin of Species, The Descent of Man, The Variation of Plants and Animals under Domestication*, among other works of Darwin, stimulated his imagination. The anti-Darwinian uproar that arose in America intensified Burbank's discipleship and evolutionary activities. As he himself says: "Darwin was banished from the churches and from most homes, and those who read him were considered as bad as he was. Perhaps I was always 'ferminist the government'; at any rate, the man everyone was discussing and most of them were damning was for that very reason interesting to me, and the controversy . . . only served to inflame my interest in every word he wrote. The blows of his personality and phrases struck on my sensitive mind were steady, sharp and persistent; my New England heredity was outweighed by the pressure of my environment—the talk of California and the furor against Darwin—and I pushed out and away."

Burbank's maiden ambition was the production on a large scale of ornamental trees and shrubs, and to expedite the growth of timber trees highly serviceable for industrial and domestic use. These results he desired to secure by means of crossfertilization and other botanical devices. Flowers of greater splendour and perfume; finer and earlier maturing fruits and vegetables were to be placed at the service of agriculturalists and nurserymen. And in all these projects he proved eminently successful.

When a famous fruit-grower required the prompt delivery of 20,000 prune trees for his orchards no nurseryman was able to accept the order. Burbank was then appealed to and, despite the difficulty in supplying so large a number, the Californian plant wizard undertook their production and delivery within nine months. This episode proved the turning point in Burbank's career. For by grafting prune buds on almond stalks, and by the subsequent elimination of the almond influences, nearly 20,000 prune trees were promptly delivered to the highly gratified purchaser.

The inheritance of acquired characters in plants and animals has been keenly contested by Weismann and his neo-Darwinian adherents. A firm belief in this hereditary transmission was never abandoned by Darwin himself, or by Haeckel, Herbert Spencer, Kropotkin, Samuel Butler, Hertwig, and many other authorities. Nor did Burbank, the world's greatest practical plant breeder, ever waver in this belief. To him the effects of use and disuse, climatal and other environmental influences were all important factors in organic evolution. Consequently, he contended that functional activities and the never ceasing impact of environing forces produce marked modifications in or-

ganic structures that are inherited by their descendants.

Speaking from half a century's experience and with so imposing a list of astounding successes to his credit, Burbank unequivocally declares: "I myself have proved beyond question or doubt, that new characteristics, foreign to anything in the heredity of the plants involved, can be and are so impressed in succeeding generations by any process of repetition, repetition, repetition, over and over again, and always for the same effect and in the same direction, and there comes out in the end through selection a new and distinct plant result."

With reference to changes in natural conditions of life to which an organism is exposed, Burbank was constrained to conclude that, "plant life is now being and always has been modified more or less by its surroundings (environment) and often rapidly and permanently changed, never to return to the old form." A similar conviction was expressed to the writer in a letter from the eminent botanist, Professor Henslow, a quarter of a century ago. Moreover, apart from the hereditary transmission of acquired structural and functional characters—and all characters, in the animal and vegetable domains must at some time been acquired in the course of their evolutionary development—no thinkable theory of mental evolution seems possible. Still, Burbank's arguments and illustrations can best be studied in the exceedingly stimulating, instructive, and inexpensive booklet under review.

T. F. PALMER

Conclusions from the Study of Apes

KOHLER's general conclusion from his study of apes is as follows:—

The chimpanzees manifest intelligent behaviour of the general kind familiar in human beings. "This applies also to the less gifted apes, who are potentially nearer to man, he opines, than to many of the lower monkey species. Being greatly limited, on human standards, in mental images, they are therefore occupied mainly with the present visual field. Their "psychological living time" is thus shorter, or in other words they have not our mental grip on past and future. Their lack of descriptive speech is also a tremendous handicap.

It now remains to inquire into the criterion of this intelligence which they share with us. When we have correctly assessed the power by which the animal sees solutions to problems, we have a parallel with the human mind; and when we have analysed that power in materialistic terms we are ready to turn to the theologian and ask for his credentials in introducing the notion of a "soul," which is supposed to do this work. Vitalist and other anti-materialist philosophies can also be dispensed with.

Kohler is at considerable pains to meet all objections to his conclusions. We can perhaps state them as follows:—

Objection. There is an unbridgeable gap between the human and the ape mind, and what looks like the genuine solution of a problem in human fashion is really only due to accident. The ape takes hold of a stick for no definite purpose at all and applies it similarly to the banana, which, to his delighted surprise, is brought closer by certain mechanical movements of the stick, movements subsequently repeated at the stimulus of the same lay-out of the field of material.

Answer. We have ways of testing whether an animal's movements are purposive with regard to the desired goal. Its foot-tracts can be traced and plotted, the movement timed, and the general behaviour noted. The following cases illustrate the

difference between solutions genuine and accidental. A hen sees food through wire netting a few inches away. Failing to reach it she displays all the signs of lost interest. She meanders about the poultry-run aimlessly, several times passing close to the food and then away again. Finally she discovers it in her track and eats it. This is an accidental solution; she has probably even forgotten seeing the bread previously. In the second case a dog is confronted with the same problem. After sniffing hopelessly at the obstacle for some time he suddenly dashes round to the food, without deviating from his course. This is a true solution.

At eleven o'clock one morning the ape Tschego is prevented from reaching an object outside her cage, by means of a box barring her access to the point of vantage. For two hours she is sulky and ill-tempered, making futile attempts with her arm; she shows no interest in the box. At one o'clock, after surveying the lay-out carefully, she suddenly shifts the box and gets the object. To prove further that the solution is genuine she subsequently shifts *any* obstacle from *any* position and by *any* means (e.g., pushing, lifting, dragging, etc.) Except when otherwise stated, this is the type of solution counted as a success by the experimenter. In cases where the animal receives chance aid Kohler makes an explicit statement to that effect.

But even with chance aid we do not escape human analogy. Don't we all learn from lucky accidents? And what was first an accident is later repeated *intentionally* by the ape: so much the more to be said for his intelligence. With man, the ape is seen to profit from chance aid, and thereby to gain help in his further procedure. In short, he can "cash in" on his lucky "breaks."

Objection. The apes imitate solutions they have seen in the behaviour of human beings.

Answer. How can mere imitation account for pause, survey, and sudden solution? Why didn't Tschego shift the box at eleven o'clock?

Moreover, why should the animal Grande and Chica expect a box to stick to a wall without support? Where have they seen human beings successfully stick boxes to walls as the means of reaching a high object? Where have they seen human beings climb up doors and swing on them to reach a suspended object? Where has Chica seen men connect two sticks together for a long vaulting pole?

Objection. Former successes, even though genuine at the time, are later mechanically imitated without foresight.

Answer. Then why should the animal try erroneous methods, which, though they could never have been successful, yet show intelligence? In order to reach an object at a range too great for one stick, Sultan at first pushed one stick along with another, thus reaching the object by their combined length, but without getting a purchase on it. Kohler makes a threefold division of the ape's behaviour in experiment, to wit, (a) good errors, (b) innocent ones (due, to natural limitations, e.g., in their knowledge of statics), and (c) crude stupidities, the after effects of previous genuine solutions. The survival-of-success-by-chance theory fails to account for good errors. What previous success could have led Rana to suppose that the juxtaposition of two sticks would double their usefulness? Why should Sultan hope to lift an impossibly heavy door over an impeding stone rather than push it round? **When had a box miraculously glued itself to a wall?**

Overruling this objection, then, Kohler states that the "animals produce complete wholes appropriate to the situation yet which cannot be carried out."

Objection. The apes have used branches as sticks before being brought into captivity.

Answer. So also have human children used sticks before being brought to face the same problem as those set for the apes.

Moreover, even if an ape should imitate some solu-

tion remembered from his life before capture, that solution has still had to be thought out by *some* ape. Again, the apes were presented with material which they could hardly have encountered in the wild state, and scrupulous care was taken in transferring them to the anthropoid station.

Objection. The animals act from instinct, not intelligence, this marking their inferiority compared with mankind.

Answer. In this case we must also grant "instinct" to the animal's stick. For instance, while drawing in one stick with another Sultan was obstructed by a pebble. According to the above objection, while Sultan himself acted blindly in his instructive body-drive, the stick he was holding performed movements calculated to bring the long stick into the convenient cross-wise position again. Instinct could not initiate novel action and would be limited to the same muscles. Something more than instinct is evidently needed! Neither physics nor theoretical chemistry allows fortuitous well-directed total movement arising out of mutually independent chance movements, irregular and all equally possible. Kohler nevertheless repudiates vitalism because the alternative is not between chance and factors outside experience (e.g., an *elan vital*). The label we are seeking is "insight."

G. H. TAYLOR

(To be concluded)

Acid Drops

With any Christian, but for widely different reasons, we deeply regret the bombing of St. Paul's Cathedral and Westminster Abbey. When we set aside the stupid superstitions they are built to enshrine and the evil uses to which they have been put, they are part of our historic heritage and stand as monuments of man's real greatness. Without any pretensions to being an art critic we have always felt that St. Paul's is a much finer building than is St. Peter's at Rome. And we have never been inside the former without admiring its beauty, and marvelling that man could produce so fine a structure, and devote it to so stupid a superstition as the world knows. Perhaps if the motto, "This Cathedral is built to display man at his highest and lowest" were written on the doorway, it might suggest far more of an educational influence than it exerts at present.

Freethinkers can look at the damage done to the Cathedral with genuine regret. But that will not prevent a sarcastic smile at those in power in such places who over and over again have given a call to the people to pray to their God for delivery from the present war and protection from danger. If God existed he could not have given a more direct rebuke to such a practice. Hundreds of Churches and Chapels have been destroyed in different parts of the country, and if each one of these places of worship had been used for whist drives to provide funds for carrying on the war they would have been more useful. The people prayed, and the Germans bombed, and God . . . ? The answer is found in the ruins of the Churches. And when the war is over and victory has been gained, the parsons will be knavish enough to summon the people to thank God for what he has done, and there will be plenty of the public foolish enough to obey the call to prayer.

We do not know anything of Mr. Emryn Jones, who is or what he is, but this ignorance of ours may be due to our lack of acquaintance with men who matter. So we just note, as an item of news, that in the *Daily Mail* he informs the world that he lost his faith before the war because the Church appeared to be doing little or nothing to remove "social evils." But he has found it again in this war because the war is a case of faith in Hitler or faith in God. We fancy we have heard that kind of story before, but Mr. Jones should have bethought himself that, if we may trust the New Testament, the mission of Jesus was not to form a new social state, or even a better one, but to prepare men for the life beyond the grave. This world's social order became of consequence to Christians only when their faith in another world waned. But Jesus told his fol-

lowers that many of those still living would see his return in order to wind up the "social state" altogether. Candidly we are not inclined to think that Mr. Jones ever did give up his "faith," he probably got disgruntled with some preacher or with some Church, which is quite a different thing. We can assure Mr. Jones that, little as we think of Christianity, we have a higher opinion of it as a world force than to imagine that it consists in formulating a desirable social theory.

A lie more or less troubles neither German propagandists nor clergymen on the war path. That is the only explanation we have to offer of a statement made the other day by the Bishop of Winchester. He said "as a nation we are beginning to recognize how vital it is that our children should be brought up in the Christian faith." Now there is only one word that fits a statement of this kind, and we leave it to everyone to express. It would have been far enough from the truth if the statement had been made of Christianity, but it is Church-teaching for which the *nation* is clamouring. In that case one would like to know who it is that is stopping the "nation" getting it? Even in politics a more deliberate falsehood than that could not be uttered.

After that the Bishop of Birmingham's statement that in the rebuilding of the life of the country we must show a *Christian* interest is very tame. Of course one would like to know what is a Christian interest in rebuilding national life; it may mean anything. The Bishop is careful not to define what is a Christian interest, it probably means only that unless the clergy are very alert and very artful, those who have genuine interest in the rebuilding of ante-war life, may leave the clergy out of it to a very considerable extent, and no rebuilding that does not give a prominent position to the Christian clergy will be acceptable to the Bishop.

Next comes the Archbishop of York who, in a speech at Bristol, tells the world that if we are to get things as they should be, we must "get behind the frame of mind due to excessive emphasis of the scientific view of life and the frame of mind concerned with injustice, unhappiness and suffering in the present world. They had to find a way to show that they did live by faith and not by knowledge." One would like to know with what better could we be concerned than with injustice, unhappiness and suffering? And how can we be concerned with them, with a resolve to reduce them to the smallest possible compass? Dr. Temple wishes people would try to live by faith—the kind of faith taught by his Church, and the value of which is shown in the bombing of his own Churches—and not knowledge. We fancy that as a Churchman he is a little disturbed by the probability that when the war is over there may be a determined effort to place faith in knowledge, and the determination to use that knowledge in the building of a better State.

"Business as usual" is evidently the motto of the Archbishop of Canterbury. It has come to his knowledge that in the case of deaths following an air raid, part of the burial service is performed in the house before the body is removed. He insists that this is out of order, and that the full burial service must be said in the Church. Probably he is afraid that if part of the burial service is done by unconsecrated hands, people may presently think that a service which is the same for all and recited as the average parson recites it is little more than a mere formality, and that the whole may profitably be dispensed with. A plain direct speech on such occasions as a funeral is surely far more human than the professional drone of a professional preacher. Most people who have attended a secular funeral are often driven to that conclusion.

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of Liverpool has improved on the parrot-like cry of the parsonry that this war is being fought for Christianity. He says we are fighting for "civilization, culture and Christianity." If the Archbishop will drop the last of the three we might agree with him.

Apropos of the removal of Sir John Reith from one political job to another, one of the newspapers wonders how he ever became Minister of Information. What we should like to know is the story of how he became the chief of the B.B.C. His own account of it is plainly incredible. But influence goes for much, no matter what Government is in power.

By thirteen votes to twelve the General Purposes Committee of the Colwyn Bay Town Council turned down the proposal for opening cinemas on Sunday. The objection was, as usual, a

religious one. We can only congratulate the Colwyn Bay Council on its intolerance and hope for the enlightenment of the Colwyn Bay public. Doubtless they deserve the local government they have.

Dr. Nicholas Zernov, preaching at Nottingham, says that "God's will is that all Christians, independent of race and nationality shall be one great family." That also we have heard before, but we content ourselves with reminding Dr. Zernov, that even the members of a family fall out with each other. And Christianity did not begin as a variety of religious sects, but as one sect. It was the members of this one sect that split up into warring bodies that taught the world what sectarian brotherhood really meant in practice.

The Bible Society announces that during the past year nine languages have been added to the number in which the Bible is now printed. That is not merely so important as providing a Bible that every one could read in the same way. Actually the announcement should have run that there are now nine more languages in which people may discuss the exact meaning of the Bible. Any author who wrote a book that everyone understood differently would be advised to give up authorship until he had mastered the art of expressing himself so that readers should be in no doubt as to what he meant. God appears, according to Christians, to have written but one book, and ever since it was published readers have been wrangling as to what the devil he meant. We cannot call the Christian God the most successful, or the most desirable of authors.

There is trouble in Oban. That town has a local Spitfire Fund, and a concert in support of the Fund was given—shades of John Knox!—on a Sunday. Ministers have denounced this outrage on the Sabbath, and there is another war in Oban. Once built, the Spitfire may kill on a Sunday, but to have a concert on the Sabbath for the purpose of raising money to build it is too much. There are limits to Scottish enthusiasm for the war.

An article by Mrs. Roosevelt, wife of the President of the United States, is in the *Queen* for October 2, from which we take the following passage:—

I came under the influence of a very interesting woman who proclaimed that she had no religion, and that the Christians, from her point of view, were rather to be looked down upon because they did right for gain. It might not be gain in this world, but it was for gain in the next, and therefore the only people of real virtue were those who believed that there was no future life, but who wished to help those around them to do what was right purely through an interest in their fellow human beings, and a desire to see right triumph because it was right. The name of the lady is not given, but judging from what Mrs. Roosevelt says, she must have exerted a very healthy influence on one brought up in a Christian family.

Bournemouth Town Council has resolved by 24 votes to 21 not to have Cinemas open on Sunday. On the other hand Worcester City Council has approved their opening. One of the Aldermen was shocked that after having a day of National Prayer they should open cinemas on the day God had selected for his own. Well, neither God nor his followers are compelled to see the "pictures." And there will certainly be a more honest motive in going to a cinema than there is in going to Church. At Seaford those who wish to see the pictures on Sunday are to be kindly permitted to do so. The Rev. A. West told the Council that Congregationalists had no objection to cinemas being open on Sunday, provided they were open in the evening only, that permission to open was for the duration of the war only, that the pictures were of a nature suitable to Sunday, and that a share of the profits was given to local charities. Damn the impudence of Mr. West and that of his brother Congregationalists. We have a little more respect for straightforward gangsters. Finally, at Doncaster a protest against opening on Sunday has been made by the Rural Deanery, and the Free Church Council. The former stressed the fact that if the Cinemas were open this might attract people who otherwise might attend the entertainments in Church Halls. We hope that the soldiers in Doncaster will note the value the Church places on their intelligence. They can be induced to swallow the absurdities of the Christian religion if they can be induced to attend an entertainment. That alone should keep intelligent and self-respecting men away. But probably the Church knows and values the type to which it can appeal with any prospect of capture.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

THE General Secretary N.S.S. acknowledges 5s. from Miss A. Davies as a donation to the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

E. LAWTON.—The fraud of the monks having built Buckfast Abbey is quite in line with Christian tradition, and as truthful. It has been exposed by several persons, and Dr. G. C. Coulton writes in his *Scottish Abbeys and Social Life*, that he frequently took the statement at its face value and helped to give it currency, "until a personal visit undeceived me. I then found that the monks were not only dependent upon a professional architect, who was never mentioned, but that nearly all the stones, even the plain stones trimmed for walling, had been cut by hired workmen, and simply laid in place by lay brethren, with whom one priest-monk had also worked." Still, we do not suppose that this and similar exposures will stop the "great lying Church" repeating this falsehood.

S. R. GAINES.—Thanks for portrait and note. One day we hope to meet this side of the Atlantic.

J. PEPPER, J. C. ROBINSON and F. S. B. LAWES.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.

F. S. LAWES.—Thanks for addresses. Literature is being sent.

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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 a number of letters from readers asking when we are going to ask for their help in meeting the heavy expenses to which the *Freethinker* has been exposed by "enemy action." They all say that they are prepared to help and are only waiting for the word. Some have sent cheques to show that they mean what they say. We deeply appreciate these communications, which are no more than we expected. We know we have our readers behind us, and it is that which gives us confidence in keeping the flag flying. That the expenses of repair and other items will be heavy we know, but we are waiting till the situation is a little clearer before we make a public statement. Meanwhile we are holding over what has been sent to be acknowledged publicly at a later date.

It will have been noted by readers that the paper has in the last few issues been printed in rather smaller type than usual. This is being done until our own machinery is in order. But we had to work quickly and take whatever outside help could be found. When our own machinery is in order we shall be more like our old self.

Mr. H. Cutner is addressing the Leicester Secular Society at the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, to-day (October 20) on "Bible Curiosities." Mr. Cutner intends dealing with the Bible from a rather little known point of view, and we hope he will attract a good audience. Leicester is not yet, we understand, a bombing area.

The General Secretary N.S.S. acknowledges receipt of an anonymous parcel of clothing for distribution by the Benevolent Fund Committee of the Society.

We are promised a new city in place of the one that has been so lavishly bombed by Germans. We hope that this more than a benevolent wish. If true, it is a very much delayed redress of an evil that never ought to have been in existence. It is also worth noting that the common comment as to the slums that housed many who have been engaged in rescue work, is that apart from the loss of life and cases of enhanced distress, the Germans had done us a service in demolishing this standing disgrace. These slums had their beginnings during a period when a great religious revival was going on in this country. Many of the leading missionary societies, the British and Foreign Bible Society, the enormous growth of the Nonconformist Churches, were all coincident in their origin with the establishment and growth of slumdom. And it is the descendants of these people who are now telling us that we can have no proper social life in the absence of belief in God. There are other aspects of this subject on which we may touch on another occasion.

We are pleased to observe in the *Blackburn Times*, two letters—one from the President of the Local Branch of the N.S.S.—protesting against the Mayor of the town using his civic position for circulating leaflets advising people to indulge in daily prayer as a means of winning the war. We have called attention to this abuse of office, and we hope that protests will be made in the many towns in which this exhibition of the nature of Christian morals occurs.

To those Christian writers already mentioned, and who are planning to completely Christianize our schools, and to the extent to seeing that none but "believing" teachers are appointed, we must add an article in the *Guardian*, by Mr. R. A. Edwards. In order to illustrate the ignorance of school children concerning Christianity, he says that "innocent country clergymen," have found evacuee children who were "completely ignorant of the meaning of Good Friday." But would these children be told the true meaning of Good Friday if they were delivered over to Christian hands? What they would get would be a Christian lie concerning the meaning of a spring festival that was practised in Greece, in Egypt, and in many parts of the East long before Christianity was heard of. And it is extremely probable that if a teacher took it into his head—assuming that the teacher placed a higher value upon telling the truth than he does on keeping his job—to tell the children the truth about Good Friday, the "innocent country clergymen" would be the first to demand that the teacher be discharged. We should be pleased to learn how many teachers would or will brave the bigots by telling children the truth about these Good Friday and other Christian ceremonies.

Mr. Edwards makes an attack on civilization by saying that "unless we are prepared to see children are taught that it is God's sky, and God's world . . . we may as well give up so much flapdoodle all this talk of a better world." To that the complete reply is that it is a world in which, until yesterday, all children were taught that this was God's world, and in which the overwhelming majority are still so taught that Mr. Edwards is indicting. A world without God could hardly make a worse show than this world has done with it. Not that we are endorsing Mr. Edwards' indictment of the world, for in spite of the war, it is a world that is beginning to recognize the evil and futility of war that is before us. If this world is God's world, then his sphere of operation marks the greatest disaster which the human mind can conceive. To rest our hopes on the growing humanity of man may bring many disappointments, but to feel that there is no hope save in a God who rules all leaves us as the only satisfactory philosophy that of "curse God and die."

The God of the savage was that what the metaphysician endeavours to express by the word *substance*. The red man, unaccustomed to generalization, obtained no conception of an absolute substance, of a self-existent being, but saw a divinity in every power. Wherever there was being, motion, or action, there to him was a spirit. . . . When he feels his pulse throb or his heart beat he knows that it is a spirit. Faith in the Great Spirit infused itself into the heart of the remotest tribe.—Bancroft... "History of the U.S.A."

A Windy Day!

ABRAHAM, when 99 years of age, and his son Ishmael, when thirteen years of age, were circumcized on the same day (Gen. xxii. 24-26).

Abraham, and his wife Sarah, were old and well stricken in age. And, for Sarah, motherhood was no longer possible. So, when an angel of the Lord heralded the birth of her first-born son Isaac, Sarah laughed! And the Lord said unto Abram, Why did Sarah laugh? (Gen. xviii. 11-13).

Taxing the Lord with killing the righteous along with the wicked, Abe pertinently asks "The High Command"—"Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?" Convicted of wrong doing the Lord started bargaining, and Abe beat him down to saving the city if ten righteous persons were found in it.

Many years elapse, Sarah, now an hundred and seven and twenty years old, dies. Abe, fuller of robust old age than ever, marries Keturah and begets, without angelic assistance, six more children (Gen. xxv. 1-2). He then dies in a good old age—an hundred threescore and fifteen years—an old man, and full of years; and was gathered to his people. (Gen. xxv. 7-8).

Like Abe, many people to-day think that the Lord is treating us rather inconsiderately. And that he ought, by prayer and supplication, to be entreated, whatever he may personally think about it, to treat us more meritoriously.

So, on the 8th day of September, 1940, the British Empire, led by Dr. Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury—"The Chief Spokesman of God to his fellow countrymen"—offers up a prayer for victory.

Says an old English proverb—"We live and learn"; and an old Scottish one—"Age aye brings wisdom, mair or less." But, has years aught to do with either proverb?

Omar (1050-1123) tells us, in living language that:—

The moving finger writes; and having writ,
Moves on: nor all your piety nor wit,
Can lure it back to cancel half a line
Nor all your tears wash out one word of it.

And that inverted bowl we call the sky,
Whereunder crawling, coop't we live and die
Lift not your hands to it for help—for it
As impotently moves as you or I.

A Broadsheet, issued 1636, tells us very thoroughly how we should pray—"First, fast and pray. Then take a quart of Repentance of Nineveh, and put in two handfuls of Faith in the Blood of Christ, with as much Hope and Charity as you can get, and put it in the vessel of a Clean Conscience. Then boil it in the fire of Love, so long till you see by the eye of Faith, the black foam of the love of this world stink in your stomach; then scum it off clean with the spoon of faithful Prayers"—and so this prayer, like the brook, goes bubbling on for another two hundred words.

Interesting as this broadsheet is, it fades into insignificance when compared with those of the Plague Year—1665. These sheets measuring eighteen by fourteen inches, have a wood-cut border made of death's heads, cross-bones, skeletons, hour glasses, and old Father Time with a scythe in his hand, and cloven hoofs instead of feet; with such titles as "London's Loud Cry to the Lord by Prayer," etc.

Under the title-page of the *Loud Crye* is a wood-cut representation of London, with an inscription in one corner—"Oh London, repent, repent!" An angel, hovering over the city, is darting arrows, daggers, and fiery tongues on the metropolis, while in the foreground are coffins, hearses, people kneeling in prayer, and Death digging a grave. The upper part of the

sheet contains a quaint but mournful, and earnest prayer.

These broadsheets are significant of much. Some people are of opinion that the plague was only the reflex of a mental condition! That all our diseases have mental counterparts. These sheets themselves may help to confirm such an opinion.

In Broadsheet—"London's Lord have mercy on us," with a wood-cut border, similar to the foregoing, we get, instead of a prayer, a versified exhortation, to the people, consisting of sixty-four lines, which, like Pope's Shadwell, "never deviates into sense." But, in the absence of prayer a corner is found for approved medicines—consisting of a drink of garlic and milk, to be taken in the morning fasting. A possett drink to remove the plague from the heart, consisting of warm ale with pimperl seethed in it. And there is the approved remedy of eating figs every morning fasting, with sprigs of rice shred and put into them.

Another "Lord have mercy on us" set in a fine wood-cut framework composed of foliage adorned with death's heads. Up the two side-margins are little wood-cuts of the virtues—Constancy, Sobriety, Temperance, Repentance, Humility, Chastity, Perseverance, Prayer, Fasting, Faith, Hope, Charity, Patience, each represented by a female figure, most of them kneeling in the attitude of prayer. The top and bottom margins are decked with spades, coffins, graves, and so forth. A few prayerful exhortations, wood-cuts of skulls, bones, skeletons, and various approved preventatives, e.g., a pint of beer, with sliced lemon, wormwood, and herb of grace, taken in the morning fasting; gives a brief description of this sheet.

One of these broadsheets dispenses with wood-cuts, etc., but it gives a greater number of medicinal recipes, e.g., "How to correct the aire"; how to make and employ perfumes; how to prepare inward medicines, etc. For instance: "Thyme, mint, rosemary, bay-leaves, balm, pitch, tarre, rosen, turpentine, frankincense, myrrh, amber; one or more of these, as they are at hand, or may be readily procured, are to be cast on the coales, to purify the house. The advice also is given that such as are to walk abroad, or talk with any, may do well to carry rue, wormwood, anglican, gentian, myrrh, scordium, valerian, Setwall root, or Zedoary, in their hands, to smell too, and of those they may hold or chew a little in their mouths as they go."

But there must be conclusions! Not one word about the true preventatives of plagues, and similar forms of disease—Cleanliness, Ventilation, and health-giving food—is there to be found in any of these broadsheets.

The wind bloweth where it listeth! Falling asleep, as I laye athinkinge, an old Abraham-man (say, 2000 B.C.) appeared before me. He told me a strange story, contrasting his age with ours, how when evil days came upon his people they always attributed them to their neglect of God. During the first struggle to remedy this neglect progress was born. In your age you now think it more necessary to pray, than to find out your own shortcomings. "Repent," said he, "cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Not until you have exhausted your own unusual energies to right wrongs, must you indulge in a moment of idle prayer. Your neglect is apparent everywhere. Contrast your last great war and the present one, GOD SAVE THE KING appeared on everything, everywhere. Why is it left out this time? For instance, thrust your hand into your pocket and examine your two registration cards. On the one dated 1915, appears in large caps GOD SAVE THE KING. On that of 1940, in the left hand corner is a convenient empty space, which it might gracefully have filled. What do you imagine God can think about such callous neglect?"

But, Error has a way of, mathematically and philosophically, righting itself. And now that science is aiding and abetting it, the truth of the old proverb may be approaching fulfilment—"When rogues fall out, honest men come by their own."

GEORGE WALLACE

Lucky Twins!

A NEWS-SHEET informs me that during an air-raid in Berlin an occupant of a shelter gave birth to twins. This act of heroic patriotism has not escaped the eye of the All High. Herr Hitler has agreed to become the God Parent of the children so bravely born. Lucky twins! Through life they will have that gentleman's constant solicitude for their spiritual welfare. It will be Hitler's pre-occupation (we will gladly spare him the time for it) to see that these two children will be brought up with all the advantages of the Christian faith; it will be his duty to see that they are trained in the religious exercises of the Catholic Church; it will be for him to keep a watchful eye on their education so that a pukka Romanist is the product in both cases; he will see to it that when their brains are plastic and unresisting they imbibe the conviction that there is only one Church that is any good for them—all the rest lead to damnation. He will see to it that all through their lives they will think they possess convictions, convictions so strong that they will treat those who have differing ideas with intolerance, and where circumstances permit, with persecution. They will lisp until they are grey-haired that they believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. And in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Father before ages. God of God; Light of Light; true Son of true God, begotten not made, consubstantial to the Father by whom all things were made.

This is the job Hitler has taken in hand; in a multiplicity of business he will still find time to look after the lucky youngsters foredoomed for a life time to convictions so lucid and so fraught with significance to their eternal welfare. There is nothing, of course, that will prevent him from putting the job "out," as he does the laundering of his shirts. There are ways of short-circuiting one's religious duties; there is always a Blessed Father round the corner, ready, even anxious to deputize; there are other quite agreeable ways. My God Mother was responsible for my silver christening-mug, which is before me as I write. It has served in its time its true function of enveloping its quota of beer. This was not the only useful result I got from a God Mother. She was almost infallibly good for a shilling when I met her. That is how she regarded the religious responsibility of her office. She short-circuited all the other matters. I daresay I was ungrateful for the shillings in those days. It is easy for youth to accept largesse as a right. So I make good any early deficiencies and thank her for them now. But I thank her much more for the part of her duty that she short-circuited. By doing that she inflicted upon me a debt I can hardly repay—it was invaluable. She did not assist in any way in that criminal operation upon childhood which would have had as a result the passing off of idiotic religious phrases as my convictions. If I am destined to look upon my christening-mug much longer may it continue to remind me that my God Mother was a poor daughter of the Church—and a good woman. Astounding though it may sound in these days of painful prating about Christian Morality, the two things often run together.

But one cannot rely upon Hitler being amicably remiss in his religious duties. As the *Universe* tells us

Hitler was a Catholic once, and for all they know may still be. And a good Catholic should take his religious duties seriously, for he has a Catholic's "wholesome fear," and knows full well what will happen to him when he falls into the hands of the living God. So the chances are that his visitations upon the two god-children will not be confined to a few silver marks. The marks they will receive will not be so innocuous; they will be wholly holy, and wholly obnoxious. But this is from the narrow point of view of one who believes in a useful life being one devoted to the service of man. God, according to Hitler and his Church, has a dislike for those who forget *him*, in their enthusiasm for Man. God likes first and foremost, correct beliefs. The prizes he gives are to those who hold the winning tickets. Are they stamped Lutheran, Anglican, Roman Catholic, Orthodox Greek, Methodist Free Connexion? We shall find out when we die, too late, alas, in the case of the great majority, to save them from the Pit!

It may be that Mamma may be honoured by Hitler's solicitude. It may be that she is not. It is certain that she will express high satisfaction. For the Gods, either religious or Secular, are all jealous Gods, and their ways if they receive not flattery and burnt offerings are unpleasant. It may be as well that Mamma fails to see what it was that she did to merit such a high honour. If she had had her way the chances of her giving birth to twins in a public air-raid shelter would have been avoided. It is not common for motherhood to wish to bring forth young life in an uncomfortable fashion. True, there was a God once who deliberately, and of malice aforethought, chose to be born in a stable. But God's ways are not our ways and if the Virgin Mary had been consulted there is little doubt that she would have held up both hands for something approximating in comfort to Queen Charlotte's Hospital.

May Hitler's hospitality lie lightly upon you, poor innocent victims of the blitz-krieg!

T. H. ELSTON

Heresies and Heretics

(Continued from page 647)

I HAVE the honour of a slight acquaintance with Robert Collyer. I have read with pleasure some of his exquisite productions. He has a brain full of the dawn, the head of a philosopher, the imagination of a poet, and the sincere heart of a child.

Is a minister to be silenced because he speaks fairly of a noble and candid adversary? Is it a crime to compliment a lover of justice, and advocate of liberty; one who devoted his life to the elevation of man, the discovery of truth, and the promulgation of what he believed to be right?

Can that tongue be palsied by a presbytery that praises a self-denying and heroic life? Is it a sin to speak a charitable word over the grave of John Stuart Mill? Is it heretical to pay a just and graceful tribute to departed worth? Must the true Presbyterian violate the sanctity of the tomb, dig open the grave, and ask his God to curse the silent dust? Is Presbyterianism so narrow that it conceives of no excellence, of no purity of intention, of no spiritual and moral grandeur outside of its barbaric creed? Does it still retain within its stony heart all the malice of its founder? Is it still warming its fleshless hands at the flames that consumed Servetus? Does it still glory in the damnation of infants, and does it still persist in emptying the cradle in order that perdition may be filled? Is it still starving the soul and famishing the heart? Is it still trembling and shivering, crouching and crawling, before its ignorant confession of faith?

Had such men as Robert Collyer and John Stuart

Mill been present at the burning of Servetus, they would have extinguished the flames with their tears. Had the Presbytery of Chicago been there, they would have quietly turned their backs, solemnly divided their coat-tails, and warmed themselves.

Third. With having spoken disparagingly of the doctrine of predestination.

If there is any dogma that ought to be protected by law, predestination is that doctrine. Surely it is a cheerful, joyous thing, to one who is labouring, struggling, and suffering in this weary world, to think that before he existed, before the earth was, before a star had glittered in the heavens, before a ray of light had left the quiver of the sun, his destiny had been irrevocably fixed, and that for an eternity before his birth he had been doomed to bear eternal pain!

Fourth. With having failed to preach the efficacy of "vicarious sacrifice."

Suppose a man had been convicted of murder, and was about to be hanged—the governor acting as the executioner. And suppose that just as the doomed man was to suffer death, some one in the crowd should step forward and say, "I am willing to die in the place of that murderer. He has a family, and I have none." And suppose further that the governor should reply, "Come forward, young man, your offer is accepted. A murder has been committed, and somebody must be hung, and your death will satisfy the law just as well as the death of the murderer." What would you then think of the doctrine of "vicarious sacrifice"?

This doctrine is the consummation of two outrages—forgiving one crime and committing another.

Fifth. With having inculcated a phrase of the doctrine commonly known as "Evolution" or "Development."

The Church believes and teaches the exact opposite of this doctrine. According to the philosophy of theology, man has continued to degenerate for six thousand years. To teach that there is that in nature which impels to higher forms and grander ends, is heresy, of course. The Deity will damn Spencer and his *Evolution*, Darwin and his *Origin of Species*, Bastian and his *Spontaneous Generation*, Huxley and his *Protoplasm*, Tyndall and his *Prayer Gauge*, and will save those only, who declare that the universe has been cursed from the smallest atom to the grandest star; that everything tends to evil, and to that only; and that the only perfect thing in nature is the Presbyterian confession of faith.

Sixth. With having intimated that the reception of Socrates and Penelope at heaven's gate was, to say the least, a trifle more cordial than that of Catherine II.

Penelope waiting patiently and trustfully for her lord's return, delaying her suitors, while sadly weaving and unweaving the shroud of Laertes, is the most perfect type of wife and woman produced by the civilization of Greece.

Socrates, whose life was above reproach, and whose death was beyond all praise, stands to-day, in the estimation of every thoughtful man, at least the peer of Christ.

Catherine II. assassinated her husband. Stepping upon his corpse, she mounted the throne. She was the murderess of Prince Iwan, the grand-nephew of Peter the Great, who was imprisoned for eighteen years, and who, during all that time, saw the sky but once. Taken all in all, Catharine was probably one of the most intellectual beasts that ever wore a crown.

Catherine, however, was the head of the Greek Church, Socrates was a heretic, and Penelope lived and died without having once heard of "particular redemption," or "irresistible grace."

Seventh. With repudiating the idea of a "call" to the ministry, and pretending that men were "called" to preach as they were to the other avocations of life.

If this doctrine is true, God, to say the least of it, is an exceedingly poor judge of human nature. It is more than a century since a man of true genius has been found in an orthodox pupil. Every minister is heretical just to the extent that his intellect is above the average. The Lord seems to be satisfied with the mediocrity; but the people are not.

An old deacon, wishing to get rid of an unpopular preacher, advised him to give up the ministry, and turn his attention to something else. The preacher replied that he could not conscientiously desert the pulpit, as he had a "call" to the ministry. To which the deacon replied, "That may be so, but it's mighty unfortunate for you that when God called you to preach, he forgot to call anybody to hear you."

There is nothing more stupidly egoistic than the claim of the clergy that they are, in some divine sense, set apart to the service of the Lord; that they have been chosen and sanctified; that there is an infinite difference between them and persons employed in secular affairs. They teach us that all other professions must take care of themselves; that God allows anybody to be a doctor, a lawyer, statesman, soldier, or artist; that the Motts and Coopers—the Mansfields and Marshalls—the Wilberforces and Sumners—the Angelos and Raphaels—were never honoured by a "call." These chose their professions and won their laurels without the assistance of the Lord. All these men were left free to follow their own inclinations, while God was busily engaged selecting and "calling" priests, rectors, elders, ministers, and exhorters.

R. G. INGERSOLL

(To be continued)

As They Passed By

It was a peaceful semi-rural area. Its well groomed homesteads were occupied by small clean living families, the gardens were open booklets of the pride, care, and taste of the owners, and the outer spaces of beautiful country scenery might well have marked it off on the Lord's chart as a bright spot in a world of sin.

True, during the summer, cricket matches were played on Sundays in a picturesque meadow, but surely no father, heavenly, earthly, or hellish would be angered by twenty-two men in spotless flannels testing in healthy and happy rivalry their respective prowess with willow and leather, or at the fringe of spectators of both sexes enjoying the game, the sunshine and companionship. One must, of course, remember that a dramatic change has taken place in our war objective. It began as a fight for freedom and democracy, and is now being talked of as a war for Christianity, with the clergy exempt from the fighting. Just as in the last war, God has been conscripted, and now everybody, except the clergy, is being asked to help God help himself to help us win the war. The change in the objective of the war has made no appreciable difference in that peaceful semi-rural area. Every night an enemy aeroplane takes up its position right over everybody's house, and remains there through the night droning the hours away. Whenever a bomb is released it falls into everybody's front garden. The loudest anti-aircraft guns are always placed and fired as near as possible to everybody's bedroom and every lump of shrapnel that comes down just misses everybody's roof or greenhouse. However one night recently there came a sudden swish, a thud, and a terrific explosion. The local air-raid wardens, alert and efficient, made investigations and a rescue squad was necessary and formed.

Next morning daylight revealed four cottages flattened out by a bomb, and others in a state of collapse. Two residents had been killed and the remainder were in a bad way from shock. Four homes had been destroyed and lay in a heap with the rubble. In one cottage the whole side wall had been blown out revealing a wrecked upstairs bedroom with its contents blown away, but on an inner wall overlooking the mass of debris was the framed picture of Jesus quite intact. Men, women, and children passed and repassed the ruins on their way and stopped in response to all that was best in human nature, to give a sympathetic thought to the sufferers, and perhaps a bitter thought for the madness responsible for such havoc. Here and there no doubt there passed by one badly afflicted with religion; one to whom the chief item of interest in that scene of destruction was the significance of that unscathed picture of Jesus; one to whom the destruction only served to emphasize the mystery of religion and intensify the glory to God the Father, to the Son, and to the Holy Ghost.

R. H. ROSETTI

Correspondence

WHY NOT TOM PAINE?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In a letter quoted in "Acid Drops," of October 6, from the late W. J. Linton, I notice an objection, often voiced in the Freethought press, to the designation of the famous Freethinker as "Tom Paine."

This objection has long seemed to me hypercritical and indicative of a lack of humour. Diminutive names by no means necessarily imply contempt. British drama rejoices in Will Shakespeare, Kit Marlowe and Ben Jonson. The great Cromwell was known to friend and foe as Old Noll, without being on that account less honoured by the one or less feared by the other. Nineteenth century statesmanship boasts its Dizzy, its Bob Lowe and its Joe Chamberlain. The Labour movement affectionately looks up to such men as Tom Burt, Will Crooks, Ben Tillett and Tom Mann.

The appellation Tom Paine, whether given to Paine by his admirers or detractors, is really a compliment. It expresses the truth that he, unlike the learned "agnostics" who deal in three guinea tomes and long words, knew how to reach the common people, so that his name deservedly became a household word. Who ever dreamt of calling Paine's famous antagonist Ned Burke? Nobody, for the simple reason that nobody ever regarded that solemn snob with the affection we feel for Paine's memory. Here's to Tom Paine, and long may he be remembered and read!

ARCHIBALD ROBERTSON

AN APPRECIATION

SIR,—Daily life in many places is full of interruptions, as you know only too well, and these largely account for my delay in thanking you emphatically for an Autobiography written in full vigour of active work. It is this which in addition to its great personal interest, makes it also such a valuable and permanent record of the progress of the Freethought movement during the period covered in its pages. Happily, in view of the terrible and inhuman suffering—a typical instance of which is given in the article "Heresies and Heretics," by R. G. Ingersoll in your issue of October 6—the efforts and the sacrifices made by yourself and your forerunners, have freed humanity from the penalties which conflicting orthodoxies have had the power to inflict upon their victims. But even in our own times when religious creeds have lost the backing of physical force, often in its worst forms, the battle still continues, and the same claims are made and have to be met by those who deny their validity. And such freedom of thought is still often a block not only to personal advancement, but even to the right man being in the right place. So the deep thanks of all Freethinkers are due to you as the brilliant Editor of, and weekly writer in, the *Freethinker*.

MAUD SIMON

DISCRIMINATION

SIR,—The authorities have seen fit to release the Rev. J. Vivian Thomas, who was an open member of Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union, on the understanding that he would have nothing more to do with this particular body of Fascists.

But a militant trades unionist, John Mason of Mexborough, remains in an internment camp without any charge against him—let alone a trial.

The interests who propagand for the war to be "against barbarism and anti-Christ" must be in powerful positions for having achieved (only temporarily, I hope), the release of a Fascist parson and internment of a "Red" working man, which is a practical manifestation of their war aim.

KESTER DRYDEN

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD OCTOBER 13, 1940

The President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, presided.

Also present: Messrs Hornibrook, Seibert, Ebury, Perry, Griffiths, Mrs. Grant, Mrs. Buxton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Financial Statement presented. Members were admitted to Edinburgh Branch, and the Parent Society. Mr. J. T. Brighton reported that the summons against him for being in a defence area without authority had been dismissed. Mr. J. Clayton also reported a successful frustration of an attempt to prevent him holding a meeting. Under the will of the late Joseph Hughes of Altrincham, the N.S.S. received a legacy of £200.

The question of winter lectures was discussed and decisions reached. The President referred to damage in the *Freethinker* offices which at the moment could not be definitely estimated.

The proceedings then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

Obituary

NORAH PATRICIA STEELE

It is with deep regret that we record the death of Norah Patricia Steele, wife of Mr. H. Steele, which took place suddenly, in childbirth, on October 7. Husband and wife were both members of the Newcastle Branch N.S.S., the husband having acted as Branch Secretary until his removal from Newcastle. The interment took place on Wednesday, October 9, and fortunately Mr. G. Whitehead was available to read a Secular Service. Our sincere sympathy goes out to Mr. Steele in his great loss, and the tragic circumstances.—R.H.R.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Mr. J. McCabe—"Is the Dark Age Returning?"

OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampsted): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 3.0, Mr. H. Cutner—"Bible Curiosities."

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