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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Morals and Religion—The Editor</i>	661
<i>Christian Courtesy—Mimnermus</i>	663
<i>Archbishop Faintheart—C. G. L. Du Cann</i>	664
<i>Some Reflections on Islam—H. Cutner</i>	638
<i>Books Worth While—F. A. Hornibrook</i>	589
<i>Conclusions from the Study of Apes—G. H. Taylor</i>	670

Views and Opinions

Morals and Religion

ONE of the queer things about Carlyle's "forked radish" is his distorted sense of values. Probably owing to a very limited power of analysis, the unimportant and the important, the trivial and the vital, the casual and the causal are placed on the same level. Owing to this the priest is able to get away with his confusion of what is necessary to life, and what is no more than a scientifically outworn view of nature, the astrologer flourishes with his fortune-telling, the casual happenings of unrelated things are bound together in the strictest terms of causation. We have witnessed—through the medium of our sensation hunting press—the gathering of thousands of people in a state of semi-hysteria to welcome the arrival of an American film star, or the return to its "home-town" of a victorious football team. If London was visited by an eminent scientist of the rank of Pasteur or Einstein he would be received at the station by a mere handful of brother scientists, while the rest of the population would live up to their idea of a scientist as a harmless sort of an individual, incapable of managing correctly the simplest of everyday occurrences, but who has done something really useful such as inventing the "movies" or giving us the "wireless."

In other directions we, as a people, show our appreciation of really great men by plastering London with monuments to great soldiers and sailors, a few kings and queens, and politicians, and very occasionally by finding room—in a not too prominent place—for an artist or a man of letters, or a prominent civilian. From another "angle," to use that curious phrase that has now become common, we are still paying the descendants of the Duke of Marlborough or of Lord Nelson, large sums of money—directly or indirectly—for having won their great victories, and it is certain that if some one suggested that the descendants of Faraday, or Darwin, or Lister should receive a State pension, the proposal would be laughed out of existence. To be quite fair it must be noted that for a limited number of eminent artists, writers or scientific workers we do give an allowance which may reach even the colossal sum of £250 annually, but that nearly always ends with their death. After all, we must stop the expenditure of public money somewhere. Shakespeare, Faraday, Darwin or Pasteur we might have managed without. But consider what this world of ours would have been without Marlborough, Nelson, Lord Baldwin, Bing Crosby and Lord Haig!

Man and His Gods

This curious misvaluation of values may easily be illustrated by the organized campaign for the identification of religion and morals, two things that are independent in their origin and aims. Blended together

they certainly have been for reasons that will be stated later, but actually and scientifically they are as much alike in origin, function and aim as are horse-chestnuts and chestnut horses. It may be noted that no one has claimed that science and philosophy owe their origin to religion, or that religion has served to give either an impetus to their development. The most that has been said here is that many scientists and philosophers have been religious men. The same relation might be as forcefully urged on behalf of the inspiring value of whiskers or an oversized nose. There are plenty of religious legends that agriculture and architecture and language were taught to man by some "divine" visitor, but they are not now taken seriously. The special sciences of geometry, biology, and astronomy were also of human origin, and by the Christian Churches were promptly denounced as inventions of Satan. It is true that to-day there are certain scientists who speak of the universe as the work of a divine mathematician, but that appears on examination to be no more than a compliment, much as the Zulus called their King the master of the earth beneath whose footsteps the world shook. Calling God a mathematician is the last compliment paid to a dying God. It would seem that while there is no longer need to fear God it is good manners to flatter him. Disraeli had a great opinion of the value of flattery, and said that when it came to monarchy one could put it on with a trowel. Judging from Christian prayers it would seem that when dealing with gods an oversized steamhopper would not be found too large.

If I may here cite from one of my own books—"It is generally admitted that man needs no supernatural illumination to discover the truths of astronomy or chemistry. Quite unaided, human industry, curiosity and intelligence have been able to unveil the mystery of the constitution of matter, to trace the action and reaction of chemical elements, to measure the size of the planets, to trace their orbits and to build up the stupendous edifice of modern science. All this man did, not merely without the aid of the gods, but often in the face of what was believed to be their direct prohibition. And yet when we come to the question of ordinary human conduct we find it held . . . that without supernatural aid man could never have made any advance along the road of moral development. He could discover everything else, but by himself he would never have found out that it was better to live peaceably with his fellows than for ever to be striving to cut their throats or have recognized the benefits of treating others with considerations."

And that I think is actually the most wonderful proposition that any man could have placed before him.

Man and Morals

Without dealing with the beginnings of morality in the higher animal world, from which beginnings man takes his start as a rational being just as surely as he inherits an animal structure, we commence with the solid fact that in matters of conduct practice precedes theory. That is another way of repeating what has been said so often in these columns, that morality is implicit in fact long before it is explicit in theory. For man is essentially a social animal, and his conduct must, merely to exist, be related to group life.

But in group life, before we reach a definitely human stage there are in operation two forms of adaptation, first, the adaptation of the individual organism to the conditions necessary to secure mere existence, and, second, the adaptation of the nature of man to his fellows. Honesty in thought and theory and speech belongs to this second phase of life. They are the unwritten laws of the herd, and they are carried into the human group. But in the human group we have the increased development of an understanding and an appreciation of the importance of different lines of conduct. Take any one of the fundamental moral qualities, and they will be found to have their significance and value in group life. Honesty, kindness, truthfulness, affection, etc., have no meaning, no significance apart from social life. Let anyone try and think of the value of any moral quality if he were living alone, with no possible relation to any other human being, and then see how empty of all meaning and value moral quality becomes. All moral teaching implies the group, it implies its beginning in group life, and its practice, long before its significance and value is understood.

In other words, as the conditions of living must be complied with in order for any animal, including man, merely to live, so those forms of behaviour that gradually gain recognition as moral have their beginning in the same unconscious process. Man becomes an ethical animal not because he consciously obeys commands, or because he appreciates the need for "higher" forms of conduct, but because he reacts to the unconscious pressure of associated life. Man is moral in practice before he is able to frame theories why certain actions persist. To think of man as being taught, or having revealed to him the need for moral action, is only one shade less ridiculous than to think of him as having to understand physiology before he can breathe.

* * *

Religion and Society

Morality, then, is derived from the unconscious side of life; the teaching of morality belongs to a later stage of social existence. But religion has a different origin. That arises in the conscious side of life. We are not able to point dogmatically and say it is at this point that morality begins, but we can say with much greater certainty the stage of human existence at which religion begins. I do not mean by this that even here we can say that at a certain point in social evolution man sits down and elaborates religious beliefs, as a modern scientist collects a group of facts and then tries to elaborate a theory that will cover and explain them. All I mean is that religion begins at that stage of mental development where man is capable of wondering why things happen, and finds an answer, mainly in the language of fear. The answer is wrong, as nearly all the first answers that man gives to his "how" or "why," are wrong, but it is that answer which gives us the real nature of religion. Essentially religion consists in an animation of nature. But, again, it must not be taken that the primitive mind proceeds by the careful consideration of a definitely stated problem. Until one gets rid of that idea one is not on the right track for an understanding of the origin of religion. Repeated experiences give rise to vague ideas with all men, and it is only after some time we discover that we have convictions on the subject before us. With primitive mankind this process must have been much more evident. It is, however, beyond reasonable doubt that it was in this state of mind that religion took its rise.

The next step in religious development lies in the formation of an embryonic priesthood—certain people who are believed to have knowledge of these mysterious, or personified forces, and who may, in a semi-magical way, control them. This priesthood is not, no priesthood ever has been, vitally concerned with morals. The evidence for this is plain and incontro-

vertible; for there is no crime in the calendar, from cannibalism onward that has not been found consonant with the ethics of a priesthood somewhere or other.

But while religion, as such, is not concerned with morals, as such, religion is concerned with its own preservation. This is something that religion has in common with every institution and with every established interest. It is also concerned with the preservation of a social order, just as every form of Government from democracy to Fascism is concerned in the maintenance of a social order that is favourable to itself. From a gang of pirates to a society of philosophers this rule holds good. All are interested in the maintenance of a given social order because it is only in and by a social order that it can continue in existence. There is in the case of religion a further corrective and moralizing force. Life preserving conduct, whether it be the life of the individual or the life of society is operative before its nature is consciously recognized. Cannibalism, for example, may be practised as a special form of dissipation or as a religious ceremony—as in the eating the flesh and drinking the blood of the god, of which the Christian eucharist is a survival—but neither can become a general and continuous practice. If that were attempted group life would be impossible. Religion develops out of social life, but it is social life that in turn places a limit on religious activities. We have seen that in our own time in the toning down of Christian doctrines that were during the lifetime of our grandparents considered essential to Christianity. The doctrine of hell, of the inerrancy of Bible teaching, of the suppression of heresy and disbelief, etc., all were but a few generations ago regarded as indispensable parts of Christianity. These doctrines are still upheld by that unashamed museum of savage beliefs and customs the Roman Catholic Church, and by the less intellectual bodies of Protestants, but with the general civilized communities they are put forward shamefacedly and with hesitation instead of being expressed loudly and authoritatively.

It is then, not the case that religion moralizes life. The truth is that always everywhere morality, the forces of social needs, humanizes religion. If Germany were to conquer the whole world, it would in the long run, have to behave much as history shows religion to have behaved. Starting with authoritative control Fascism would be compelled to come to terms with socialized human nature, the more certainly as pressure from without ceased to operate as a coercive factor. So with religion. It is distinct from morality in both origin and aim. But it has to keep in touch with social life and moral rules just as a pickpocket has to keep in a workable proximity to the man whose purse he intends stealing. Religion is forced to assume a passably moral tone, in spite of its essentially non-moral character, in order to maintain its own existence. A predatory animal must live in the neighbourhood of its prey or it would starve to death. For the same reason religion is bound to emphasize the importance of the maintenance of some form of social order. In this respect it stands on no higher and no different level than that which is expressed by any recognized association.

There is or should be to-day no confusion and no mystery about the nature of religion and the nature of morality. And of all the unadulterated nonsense that is now being uttered by responsible men (or by men in responsible positions) and by such organizations as the B.B.C. commend me to such recent publications as *Christianity in Thought and Practice*, in which the main purpose is to prove that only by believing in God can we possess a reasonable basis for morals. That booklet is a fine example by an able man of primitive savagery masquerading in a Bond Street suit of clothes.

Christian Courtesy

Stuffing the ears of men with false reports.

Shakespeare

Broad ideas are hated by partial ideas; that is, in fact, the struggle of progress.—Victor Hugo.

MATTHEW ARNOLD, in one of his delightful essays in which he was endeavouring to infuse some "sweetness and light" into his hard-headed and commercially-minded countrymen, criticized the aggressive manner in journalism and literature. He called it the manner which "aims at an effect upon the blood and senses than upon the spirit and intellect, and loves hard hitting rather than persuading." Arnold himself, it is pleasant to remember, could hit exceedingly hard, but he always wore the velvet glove over the steel gauntlet, although it was very difficult to persuade his antagonists that he was a Bayard rather than a boxer.

This apostle of "sweetness and light" was never tired of the pleasant pastime of bishop-baiting, and his playful sallies with the then Bishop of Gloucester for that prelate's loudly-expressed wish "to do something for the honour of the Godhead" has enshrined that bishop's memory like a fly in Amber. Arnold also fluttered the dovescotes of Orthodoxy by lightly comparing the Christian Trinity to "three Lord Shaftesburys." When rebuked for this levity, Arnold serenely said that he had no wish to give pain to a distinguished philanthropist. All this, however, broke no bones. Like the terrible curse directed against the famous jackdaw of Rheims, nobody was a penny the worse for it. Religious animosity, on the other hand, has always been responsible for much that was really brutal in speech and in action, from the days of Hypatia to those of Ferrer. Trinitarians killed Unitarians, Roman Catholics burned Protestants, and Protestants killed Catholics. Both Catholics and Protestants tortured and murdered Freethinkers. The austere Milton left the slopes of Parnassus and used the language of Billingsgate when he attacked Priestcraft. The light-hearted Sydney Smith could no more speak civilly of Methodists than Mr. Hilaire Belloc of Jewish people. Indeed, Anti-Semitism was prevalent. Daniel O'Connell described Disraeli as "a lineal descendant of the unrepentant thief that hung upon the cross," and prompted the urbane Disraeli to remark that such language was unexpected, remembering that "one half of Europe worships a Jew, and the other half a Jewess." William Cobbett, always a hard-hitter, was more than usually brutal in his treatment of Quakers, who bore the disarming title of the "Society of Friends." That a Freethinker must be either a fool or a rogue is a postulate with the small but noisy tribe of Christian Evidence lecturers. In his later years, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle denounced Materialism with unsavoury rhetoric, a form of speech he never used before he embraced Spirit-Rapping.

Old Doctor Samuel Johnson was not at all a bad-hearted man, but Oliver Goldsmith was quite right when he said, "There is no arguing with Johnson, for when his pistol misses fire he knocks you down with the butt-end." Johnson was absolutely at his very worst when dealing with Freethinkers. He called Bolingbroke "a scoundrel and a coward." Yet the worthy doctor had never read the author he so savagely pilloried. "I have never read Bolingbroke's impiety," he remarks, with unexpected simplicity. To Johnson, sceptics are vermin which his forcible rhetoric would fain exterminate. Giants like Hume, Gibbon, Voltaire were all scoundrels. Men like Priestley and Price were an abomination. Boswell says that when Dr. Price came into a company where Johnson was the latter instantly left the room. Rousseau was "one of the worst of men, a rascal who ought to be hunted out of society."

In the early years of the nineteenth century Shelley's known Atheism incurred the hatred of Christians, and no enmity is more relentless or more venomous. The abuse which was supposed to have killed John Keats was the quintessence of courtesy compared with the assault and battery made upon Shelley by the enlightened press of a Christian country. Here, for example, was what the *Gentleman's Magazine* had to say of the gifted young poet when the news of his untimely death by drowning reached England:—

Percy Bysshe Shelley is fitter subject for a penitentiary dying speech than a lauding elegy; for the muse of the rope rather than that of the express.

That was what a periodical edited by a Christian gentleman for Christian gentlemen had to say of the young Freethinker who had devoted his short life of twenty-nine years to the service of Humanity. Not long before another representative of the "Religion of Love," we recall, met Shelley in the post-office at Pisa, called him "a damned Atheist," and knocked him down.

Half a century later, Charles Bradlaugh and Annie Besant were treated like a couple of mad dogs for advocating Atheism. Not only was Bradlaugh excluded from the House of Commons for years after being duly elected for Northampton, but it was only his legal astuteness which prevented him from being imprisoned. Labouchere, who also represented Northampton, and who was as sceptical than his colleague, was once asked: "Are you the dreadful member for Northampton?" His reply was characteristic. "No, dear lady, I am the Christian member."

G. W. Foote, the first editor of the *Freethinker*, had his full share of abuse. His waste-paper basket was seldom without an insulting letter or postcard sent to him by pious people. "I have been accused of all the crimes in the calendar, except plain murder," he once remarked, "That solitary exception is due, not to considerations of humanity, but to the difficulty of finding a corpse." In a debate with a clergyman, his opponent referred to Foote's "public-house methods in debate." "It may be so," retorted Foote, "I defer to the reverend gentleman's intimate knowledge of such places."

In the Great Republic of the West, Christian prejudice was just as prevalent. The memory of that great man, Thomas Paine, whose hand first wrote the arresting words, "The United States of America," has been assailed with a veritable Niagara of abuse from Orthodox folk. Theodore Roosevelt expressed the common attitude in his jibe that Paine was "a filthy little Atheist," which was three lies in three words. For Paine was about six feet in height, the reverse of filthy, and not an Atheist. In the case of Colonel Robert Ingersoll, religious prejudice barred him from important positions in the political world. Seeing a well-bound set of Voltaire's works in the Colonel's library, a friend asked: "What did that cost you, Bob?" "That," replied Ingersoll, "cost me the Governorship of Illinois." Indeed, a man of his consummate ability as lawyer and orator might easily have attained the proud position of President of the United States. Fortunately, Ingersoll esteemed duty more highly than dollars. In an age of commercialism he remained faithful to principles; in an age of graft and ostentation he cared for truth.

What is one to say of these examples of Christian courtesy? Shakespeare's words "An ounce of civet, good apothecary" come to the mind. But is it not clear that the average Christian is not equipped by education and training for passing judgment on such a matter as Freethought? And is it not also clear that men may be baptized in the faith of a Religion of Love and yet have never been converted to civilization?

MIMNERMUS

Archbishop Faintheart

AMONGST my feebler ambitions is the hope of living long enough to see His Grace, the Archbishop of York converted to the Christian faith. My readers will probably think my hope utterly unreasonable. For why should Dr. Temple give up a princely salary and a palace at the behest of a crucified Jew called Jesus Christ, who possibly never lived in the flesh, and may be a mere creation of literary genius? Still, I like to cherish this foolish hope; like Milton's hope of fame, it is the "last infirmity" of my mind.

This very week, the spark of hope that "William Ebor" may become "Saint William," and "find Jesus" (as vulgar Nonconformists might say) burns a little brighter. For what has happened? Something almost incredible. This bombing, fighting Archbishop, (in words from a safe place), formerly as warrior-like as Odo, the half-brother of William the Conqueror, has actually discovered that, after all, we ought to obey one (only one, be it noted) of Jesus Christ's commands. And he has told his diocese so; and the *Times*, that highly-theological newspaper has told me. Do you wonder that I am excited? Just imagine the irony of it! A Christian Archbishop obeying Christ. And in war-time. Yet they say the age of miracles is past.

Archbishop Temple, at a time "when the threat from air-raids is particularly great" (he should live in London where the so-called "threat" is an actuality) states:—

More than ever at such a time we should be careful to obey Our Lord's command to pray for our enemies.

Tell that to our Prime Minister and his Cabinet! Tell that to compulsory church-parades of fighting soldiers, sailors and airmen! Tell it not only in the diocese of York; publish it not merely to the Church of England! Tell it to the Reich-Chancellor Hitler and his Goering, Goebbels and Hess. Tell it to the Pope and Mussolini! Tell it to the German and Italian Armies, Navies and Air Forces. And let them all get on with praying for each other. For praying is more harmless than bombing and shelling and starving. Let them pray. No babies will die as a result; no women will be mangled; no homes will be shattered. As a sane taxpayer, I prefer prayer between England and Germany to war between England and Germany because it is cheaper.

The excellent Archbishop goes on to say:—

I have been sorry to find how often this duty (of prayer for the enemy) has been neglected, and how often when selection is made from the official forms of prayer this section is omitted. Let us be specially earnest with such prayer.

Yes, indeed; let us: I too am sorry; I share his well-expressed sorrow with the Archbishop. But His Grace is a little unreasonable to expect his Christian clergy to have prayed for the enemy without a lead from an Archbishop. That might have been dangerous. Patriots might have walked out of Church and shaken off the dust of the House of God in disgust. Anglican curates and vicars who prayed for Hitler or even Goering, might have been denounced to the authorities and put in gaol without trial, either as "Fifth Columnists," or as creating "alarm and despondency." Dr. Temple should be reasonable; you can't make Christ's men out of Christian clergymen, all at once, if at all. For as Christ might have said: "Are silk purses made from sow's ears?" or as he did say: "Do men gather grapes of thorns or figs of thistles?"

But the Archbishop, having started on the steep and slippery slope to Jesus Christ, must go on. Christ said "Love your enemies. Do good to them that hate you." Logically Dr. Temple must love Herr Hitler and make Churchill and the rest of us do it too. We

must do good to Germany. And Christ said: "Resist not evil." Dr Temple must cease to talk about "fighting as true Christians," for true Christians don't fight, they love. So the war must end? And on the Christ-command if a man take our coat we must give him our cloak also, now that Hitler has taken the Channel Islands it is our clear Christian duty to give him London at least, not to mention the British Isles. Certainly we must restore those former German colonies in Christ's name.

But Christian England, even if Dr. Temple were to surprise his country by becoming a real and complete Christian, might not be willing to do that. Still, the converted Dr. Temple, need not despair. There is ample scope and verge enough for him to carry out the Master's teaching in his private life. What says Jesus to high-priests and great possessors? "Sell all thou hast and give to the poor. And come, follow me." Here is a chance for the Archbishop of York. Sell the Palace and its contents, the mitre and crozier—never mind legal difficulties—and become a Christian instead of a mere hireling-shepherd.

Come, my Right Reverend Father in God, what is the use of being Archbishop Faintheart? Will you let the publicans and harlots go into the Kingdom of Heaven before you? What use can the Carpenter of Nazareth, that Son of Man who had not where to lay his head, have for the pomp and pride of prelate? "Come to Jesus, my Archbishop," as Salvationists might say. "Do not keep back part of the price." "Woe to the feeble hands and faint heart and to the sinner that goeth two ways," says the ancient Hebrew wisdom. Be bold, Dr. Temple. Take the straight and narrow path that leadeth to eternal life. Let me convert you to the faith of Jesus Christ. Become as much a free-thinker as Christ was; he who was crucified for his freethinking.

Of course, the other Archbishop, he of Canterbury, won't like it. But leave that admirable politician to his Church-politics and to the Diabolic Succession of Annas and Caiaphas, while you join the true Apostolic Succession of fishermen Peter, James and John. If you follow Christ all England will say you are mad. But there are worse things than being thought mad. There is being, for instance, what John Milton (whom you dislike to read, and no wonder!) called, in his incomparable ode of *Lycidas* a "blind mouth," that is to say, a well-fed and self-satisfied hireling-shepherd. That is being a modern Archbishop in the present-day Church of England, an Anthony Trollope type of ecclesiastic.

Come, I beseech you "in the bowels of Christ," as Oliver Cromwell said. I appeal to your Grace's better nature—that part of you which has the half-courage to say to Britain in war-time: "Pray for the Enemy." You have said at once too much and too little—too much for those who accept and would perpetuate war, too little for those who abhor and would abolish war. Why not accept completely the standpoint of Christ and Tolstoy? Because it seems to your intellect completely foolish? Well, look where the wisdom opposed to Christ's foolishness has landed the world. Besides you are vowed, as Christ's man, to uphold him as an Omniscient God, and will you deny him like the dastardly Peter at cock-crow? After all, it is just conceivable that Christ, paradoxical and foolish as his words seem, may be right. For Confucius said much the same.

And if one English Bishop stood by his Master, perhaps a German Bishop might be shamed into honesty, too. Even the Pope might be converted to Christ. And the Christian warring world lay down its arms instead of "fighting like true Christians," as you well say. . . . But I dream a foolish dream: none of you is converted to your professed faith in Jesus Christ yet, and none of you is likely to be.

C. G. L. DU CANN

Ever-Changing Man

No man is precisely the same individual for two days running. In some way or other he is just a little different to-day from what he was yesterday, although the difference may not be noticeable, and to-morrow he will be, in ever such a small degree, unlike what he is to-day.

We are said to change every seven years, but in point of fact the very food that we eat, the thoughts that we think, the matter that we read and our daily experiences—these singly or together produce some little immediate change in our physical or mental make-up.

It is a well-known fact in the medical profession, that lack of exercise and improper food, or the insufficiency of some necessary ingredient in his diet is likely, sooner or later, to play havoc with a man's constitution or retard its proper development. It is said, for example, that the Asiatics are small in stature, partly at any rate because of their indolence and wrong-feeding. The Indian coolie lives on little more than a handful of rice per day and is undernourished and undeveloped in consequence. And comparatively recently it was discovered that a large percentage of the people living in two villages in Switzerland—Hunzenschwill and Kaistern—suffered from goitre because of a deficiency of iodine in their diet. The disease was soon cured once the cause was discovered and the correct remedy applied.

As with our bodies, so with our minds: what we put into them produces the natural result. If we fly into a passion—as we all do at times, in spite of our presumed perfect self-control—and when the beast in us breaks through the veneer of civilization and we let ourselves "go," our anger generates a poison which has a bad effect on the system. We may not commit a murder—although many a crime has been committed as the result of the author of it flying into a violent fit of temper and losing control of himself!—we may not go that far, but our temporary insanity leaves its mark somewhere. A good many of us have suffered from remorse when we have afterwards thought of some stupid act of which we have been guilty. . . .

Equally naturally: good and suitable food for the mind and the body produces the opposite effect. A book which provides enlightenment and spiritual sustenance—the word "spiritual" is used here, of course, in a non-theological sense—is worth much more than its weight in gold. It helps us out of the rut and on the way—on the way to a better understanding of ourselves and all those with whom we come in contact. For example, no one can read G. Elliot Smith's *Human History*, or Mark Graubard's *Man the Slave and Master*, or any book of that kind, without feeling much the better and wiser for it.

Friends and acquaintances, too, can be helpful—especially friends, those, that is, to whom one can go at any time for a helping hand, well knowing that it will be freely given. These helpmates can be of two kinds, the personal and the impersonal, those whom we know personally, and those whom we only know through having read their books or heard them lecture, but they all give us something of value—something to treasure in our mind after we have gone our separate ways—if we are in the right mood and receptive at the time of our meeting.

Travel, too, clears the mind for those who have the eye to see the contour of the land over which they are travelling, and the ear to listen to those with whom they come into contact. To move about from place to place and to mix with all sorts and conditions of people is to get a grip of the affairs of the world that is unobtainable in any other way. To stay put is often times to stay ignorant. You cannot know how the other man lives unless you go to see with your own eyes. Hearsay evidence is very untrustworthy.

We never can tell, precisely, the influence that anyone or anything has upon us. The effect of spending an hour with some congenial companion, or the reading of some book may be very far-reaching. It largely depends upon ourselves and our method of approach.

As we grow older we discard many of the precepts and practices of our youth, and, whether we are aware of it or not, we become different individuals, sometimes with vastly different likes and dislikes, because of what we absorb as the years go by. Appetites of the mind replace appetites of the body, and as pairs, or families or groups, we grow closer together in happy relationship—or asunder—in consequence.

We are, in truth, all part and parcel of the Universe, and although the majority of us are totally unconscious of the fact, like every other creature upon this planet, we are subject to the law of unceasing change, for better or worse.

GEO. B. LISSENDEN

Acid Drops

We have seen, and enjoyed, the performances of David Niven on the films. The greater pity that he should exhibit so much foolishness off the screen. The *Liverpool Echo* cites him as saying to a friend, "I have a feeling that something will end the war suddenly. It may be even God pulling the strings. He certainly pulled one at Dunkirk." In what direction? Was it that of the heavy—almost irreplaceable—loss in ammunition? Or in the loss of life? Or in the encouragement given to the Germans to overrun France? If David Niven were a personal acquaintance of ours, we would advise him to stick to the films. The script is written by others.

Anyone may be forgiven for believing it to be a law of nature that when a man has a Government job he at once partakes of the infallibility of "God Almighty." He becomes endowed with the lack of common sense characteristic of a machine, and an overwhelming sense of his own importance. But sometimes this exhibition of self-importance is carried to too great lengths. We are all aware for example of the apparent absurdity of governmental blocking of telephone lines by officials for days, and even weeks at a time. The answer is that they may be needed for Government use. Just so, but the intelligence of a Government official ought to be capable of realizing that this does not justify the refusal of the telephone to all subscribers all and every day. And that within twenty miles of Charing Cross. Even within a dozen miles of London the public is curtly informed "Cannot accept any long distance London calls." Meanwhile there is no reduction in charges. Charge without service is a very common form of governmental robbery.

But sometimes this policy goes too far. Thus, the Rev. G. Gordon, of Poling, writing indignantly to the *Times* (October 12) says that he had occasion to 'phone concerning arrangements for "divine service," a most important thing considering we have had so many praying orgies, and our Secretary for Foreign affairs (and God only knows how he got the appointment) has advised us all to keep on praying. The vicar was told that no message could be transmitted. He explained that the call "was in the service of Almighty God." That made no difference. Worse than that, he was actually informed "that His (God's) name was not on the list of urgent calls." That certainly explains why so many prayers are unanswered or go astray. But to be told in a government office that communications with God are not matters of urgency! Well, something ought to be done about it.

Most people are familiar with the lines which appeared in *Punch* during the Franco-Prussian War, put into the mouth of the pious German King:—

I write to you my dear Augusta
We've given the French another buster
Ten thousand Frenchmen sent below
Praise Him from whom all blessings flow.

This was written as a satire intended to expose the hypocrisy of religious people praying for victory, or thanking God for victory when it involved the deaths of men who were as much

God's children as the rest of us. All prayers for victory in war do of course mean that. It is saying, in a roundabout way, "O Lord help us kill a few thousand of thy children, and we, also your children, will thank you for the fatherly care you have taken of us." But it would be far too honest, and therefore not religious, for those who pray to say what they mean in clear and distinct language.

We have written the above as a consequence of some letters that have been appearing in the *Daily Telegraph*. We have had constant prayers for victory since the war commenced, but somehow the victory is over-long in coming, if we believe that the decision rests with God. But Lady Macassey wrote complaining that the Church had not done its job properly. She apparently wants to make it plain to God that it is *victory* we want and as the only way to get it is to kill a sufficiently large number of God's German children, and the fewest possible number of his British ones, our prayers ought to be of a more direct (coercive) character. The Prebendary of Hereford Cathedral writes in reply, that in his church they have a prayer that is distinct enough. It asks "God to bless our arms with victory," and that, he obviously thinks, should be a strong enough hint for God to know exactly what he wants. Even God ought to know that we cannot get victory without killing God's German children. Several letters, in the same strain, have been published. Still some are not satisfied. We are doing our job, and God ought to do his. His only excuse is that we have not told him directly what is the exact aim of these prayers which the recording angels must be almost tired of registering.

Now as one who has never at any time blamed God for anything or asked him for anything, we suggest another method which should be at least worth praying for. Something like the following should be prayed:—

Oh Lord, thou knowest that we are engaged in a war which threatens to spread over the whole world. Thou knowest that the enemy we are fighting against is thy German and Italian children, and that the only way in which we can gain victory is by killing a few millions of them. But we also are thy children, and, in pursuit of thy glory, we have carried thy name to all parts of the earth, and many millions have been made to worship thee who would without us have remained ignorant of thy very existence. Therefore we pray thee to strike our enemies dead. As your sacred book says: Let their children be fatherless and their women be without husbands, parents, fathers and brothers. Direct our aims and multiply our resources as thou didst the oil in the widow's cruse. Help us to kill, and thy name shall be exalted for ever in our national annals.

Now this would leave no doubt in heaven as to what we are after. If no answer comes within a definite time, say three months, then let us adopt another plan. We have declared a blockade against the "enemy," and we have realized the policy of appeasement will not work on earth, and the course of events has shown that it has little more influence in heaven. So let us stand up like men and inform the Lord that unless victory is given us all places devoted to his worship will be closed, his army of accredited servants, from Archbishop to local preacher, will be put out of employment, and his name will no more be heard in the land. We have tried grovelling where God is concerned, now let us try what standing up will do. After all, the war is rapidly assuming the character of, "He who is not with us is against us," and there should be something tangible to show when, in such days as these, we are spending so much of our energy and money on a God who is said to rule all.

A little while back a "famous convent and school in the London area" was set on fire by an incendiary bomb. It would have been in accordance with Roman Catholic traditions if the bomb had rolled off the convent and selected a business premises owned by an Atheist, or at least a Protestant, and burned up *his* building. But nothing unusual happened. The Convent was burned, and to an *Evening Standard* reporter the "Mother Superior" said that she and the other nuns had saved many things, but they could not save the most sacred thing of all, the Host, which is the very blood of Jesus Christ. She explained: "As we cannot touch the Host we sent for a priest."

The rule that a woman must not touch the Host is a very ancient one in the Christian Church. Her touch would have defiled it, and this fell into line with the Church teaching of the spiritual inferiority of women. For this reason, she was never allowed to touch the Host with her naked hands. On the other hand men could capture the host and work miracles with it. Sometimes the Host (the actual body of Jesus) took care of itself. As for example when a priest thought to get the better of a woman through its influence he placed the Host in his mouth. At once he became so tall that his head banged against the roof of the Church. One could fill a volume with the wonders worked, for good or evil, by the power of the Host. And the Roman Church is, when it has the chance, just what it always has been.

Professor Einstein recently lectured in New York, and he had some hard things to say about the belief in a personal God. In fact, he wanted even teachers of religion to have the courage to give up "the doctrine of a personal God, that is, to give up that source of fear and hope which in the past placed such vast power in the hands of priests." A howl of indignation rose from both priests and numbers of priest-ridden citizens at this very moderate attack on their religion, and, if screams could kill, Prof. Einstein would have been dead a thousand times. The United States of America, with all its boast of democracy and freedom, is still a very hot-bed of Roman Catholicism and Calvinism—to say nothing of hundreds of ridiculous off-shoots from these main branches, and the arguments they use in support of their priests seem to be not one whit above those which Ingersoll attacked so brilliantly 60 years ago. It is to be hoped that Einstein will not be deterred by the violent attacks upon him from continuing the good work.

But there is one thing that Professor Einstein ought to bear in mind. That is that the only kind of a God is a personal God. To say I believe in a God, but not in a personal God is playing with words, and deceiving many of those to whom the confession is made. One might as reasonably say, I believe in man, but not in a man who stands upright with a bony skeleton, two arms and two legs, etc. In that case the prompt and proper reply would be that such an object is not a man at all. When people pray to or praise God it is a personal being they have in mind. All the religions the world has seen have been based upon the belief in a personal being capable of answering or appreciating praise. If Dr. Einstein is an Atheist, and he evidently is, he should say so. We will deal with this matter more fully next week.

Christians must be a little puzzled at events concerning their religion in that home of religious beauty, Japan. It appears that a joint religious conference recently took place there under the auspices of the Japanese Minister of Education to uphold "the amalgamation of all sects of Buddhism, Christianity, and Shintoism into one big denomination. The conference was attended by 56 Buddhist sects, 27 Christian sects, and 13 Shinto sects." A week previously to this "150 Christian leaders assembled in the Ginza Church, Tokio, and opposed the fusion of all Protestant Churches into the Orthodox Christian Church of Japan." In addition to this, we are informed that the Anglican Church in Japan is passing under complete Japanese control, its English and American Bishops having been sacked by the Japanese Anglican Bishop of Tokio. All this is more than confusing though we must say that, in the ultimate, we fail to see why a Christian priest should not be in absolute agreement with a Shinto one, or even with those of the 56 Buddhist sects. A priest is a priest whether he comes from England, Japan, or the wilds of Central Africa.

A writer in the *Scot's Independent* points out that by the detention in Brixton Prison of Captain Ramsay (the ridiculous person who managed to gain a little notoriety by his attempts to get the International Freethought Congress prohibited in London) his constituency is being disfranchised, and therefore Ramsay should be either tried or released. We have considerable sympathy with this point of view. On the other hand, one can hardly imagine any reasonable person feeling aggrieved at Captain Ramsay not being in Parliament. True it may be argued that where folly is so well represented there is no call for complaint at Ramsay's absence. On the other hand no intellectual qualification is required for the vote, and if Parliament properly represents the electorate fools as well as philosophers should be represented.

TO CORRESPONDENTS

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT FUND.—E. Swale, 10s.

FOR Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—A. Addison, 2s. 6d.

F. S. LAWES.—Thanks for advice. We are taking, and do take, all possible care both as regards colds and other things. But there is some risk in being alive. Anyway we appreciate what you say.

W. MILLS.—Sorry your letter is too lengthy for insertion. Our space is more limited than ever.

S. L. MANSON.—You should never make the mistake of taking a dictionary, even one of the highest standing, as an infallible authority. The main task of a dictionary is to register usage. A dictionary makes a very useful consultant, but a very dangerous master.

D. PENFOLD.—Thanks for cutting. Always welcome.

A. WILLIAMS.—Thanks for letter. But we have no knowledge of any sub-editor of the *Freethinker* in this office. We wish we had. But, somehow this story is rather persistent.

S.H.—Received and shall appear at an early date.

Mr. W. RAINFORD writes: "I have been an irregular reader for many years. But what with the dope from the B.B.C., plus the free (in parts) press, I find myself waiting anxiously the arrival of the *Freethinker*, which has been on regular order now for some months. It has been three days late recently, but if it were three weeks late its articles are still years ahead of any other weekly, and it is well worth waiting for." We can only say that it is the consciousness of the body of appreciative readers we have that is a constant encouragement to go ahead.

Mr. H. IRVING.—One of our old and esteemed readers, also says that he has been feeding several young men with copies of the *Freethinker*. After some weeks he asked one of these young men how he got along with the paper. The reply was, "Oh, I am a subscriber now. I have also ordered several things from the office." As we have often said, there is a probable reader of the *Freethinker* "round the corner." So let our well-wishers keep their eyes open.

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.

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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

In our last issue we made a few comments on the avowed intention of those in power to build a better London in place of the slums that are now being wiped out by German bombs. We return to the subject as a consequence of an illustration we have seen of the new city, and if that is to be taken as an instalment, we hope the plans will be revised. The illustration is of a huge block of flats, all looking very nice and tidy, but far, very far, from what we consider homes. If the inhabitants of post war are to be housed, much as we house cattle, the new flats will, of course, be a great improvement on what was, but it is not exactly our conception of a home. Man is, of course, a gregarious animal, but he is gregarious with a difference, and it is that difference which is all important.

What we have said, and what we are saying, may, of course, be no more than an expression of prejudice, or at best of personal taste. But we hope there is more in it than that. It is noticeable that the majority of dwellers in flats seldom refer to their shelters as homes. Instinctively they avoid this word.

They say, "I have a flat," or "come round to the flat," or some such expression. On the whole they bring to my mind a rather superior kind of prison with three, four, or five-roomed cells, each prisoner provided with his own key, able to come out or go in whenever he pleases, with a number of warders (attendants) ready to do what they can to make things comfortable, with more elastic rules than are found in other prisons. There is one other thing of importance. The length of occupancy of these pseudo-prisons is fixed by the prisoners themselves. The principle of the indeterminate sentence, originally introduced in Elmira, U.S.A., is in operation. But these "flats" are not in our judgment what is covered by the word home. Above all, they are not ideal places; however clean, however nicely warmed by a system of heating that can easily work out badly, they cannot take the place of a real home. But all this may be, of course, sheer prejudice. We have a feeling that it is no more than a justifiable bias.

No one will dispute that the slums which have existed, and still exist, were a disgrace to a country calling itself civilized. No one will deny that it would be a crime to erect potential slums in their place. But our planners should aim at something higher than the mere housing of people. We should create houses that bear the stamp of individuality, a man's house should always bear that stamp. But what kind of individuality can there be in a "home" which is just one of thousands? The jerry-built rows of houses, each one resembling the rest, were bad enough, but a town of flats would be more appalling still. The planners of the future should aim at creating individuality, and that means the creation of differences, different ideas of living, of modes of dress, of taste, of habits. It has been said, of late many times, that Democracy rests on the sacredness of the individual. It does, but still more does it rest on the encouragement of, and on the sanctity of, differences. Democracy can exist only with this, for individuality, if it is to be useful means different individualities. Men say to-day they are fighting for their homes. They say it with conviction and with passion. Would the cry "We are fighting for our flats" be nearly so inspiring?

The Roman Catholic Church and the Modern Age, by F. A. Ridley ("Freedom Press," three-halfpence) is an interesting little pamphlet by one who has made a careful study of the Roman Church of to-day and its relation to economic developments. Mr. Ridley considers that the aim of the papal policy is "to keep the throne of Western civilization vacant, so that when the hour of dissolution strikes, Rome can mount to power." That is not at all a bad way of summing up the aims of the policy of the Church of Rome, and it finds much to support it in the existing European civilization. The Roman Church, as we have so often pointed out, has no politics, and its one aim is to use any political party or movement that would lead in the direction of reducing the European States to the conditions of medieval times. If there had been more first-rate intelligence behind the German Fascist movement it would have made friends with the Roman Church.

The Leicester Secular Society is holding Sunday afternoon meetings in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, and to-day (October 27) Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak on "Digging for Victory, God v. Man." The churches are making frantic efforts to turn the war situation on to their credit side, and wherever possible Freethinkers should support local efforts to keep the Freethought point of view before the public. To-day's lecture begins at 3 p.m.

The reports of Sunday cinemas, so far as we have been able to note them during the past week are—at Alfreton (Derbyshire) opening refused, churches in high glee. Derby "no action" (reply to a recommendation) at Blackburn 28 votes against, 17 for. One member of the Council well described Blackburn as being a "dead town" on Sunday. That is because the town is not properly alive the other six days of the week. On the other hand Stourbridge has decided to risk it and have cinemas on Sunday. Hornsea also is daring enough to follow the same course. One councillor, in opposing, said he would have supported the motion if it had been for the duration of the war only—which leaves us wondering why Sunday performances are right in war-time and wrong when we are at peace.

Some Reflections on Islam

I.

For some years before the war there was an active movement in this country for the conversion of more or less disgruntled Christians to the religion founded by Mahomed—though, of course, everybody was a welcome guest to the fold.

This movement is called the Woking Mission, and the faithful meet at the Shah Jehan Mosque proclaiming the one and only Allah and Mahomed his prophet; and it is only fair to add that they have made quite a number of converts who give their testimony to Islam much as they might have done to the Salvation Army or Roman Catholicism. We are even made happy every month with a portrait of the convert in the *Islam Review*, the only fly in the ointment being that these portraits and their signed declarations have an unhappy likeness to similar ones embellishing patent medicine advertisements.

Mahomedanism is monotheistic like Judaism, though much more is made of its founder than Jews have ever made of Moses; and a certain amount of veneration is allowed to others of God's prophets, like Jesus. As far as I can understand Islam, it does not really question the Bible, but accepts its "history" and "miracles" as quite true. Though Mahomed himself does not appear to be responsible for any miracle, his followers seem to have credited him with quite a number, which is only right, as a religion without properly attested miracles and whole-hearted contemporary believers in them has no right to be called a religion. At all events, history shows that a religion to prosper must have a God—the only one—and if not a Son, then at least a Prophet who knows exactly what God thinks, says, and does. Incidentally, I must confess never sharing the enthusiasm shown by so many believers for a religion which is monotheistic as against one which is polytheistic. Why, I ask with due reverence, is a religion with one God supposed to be on a higher plane than one with several Gods? Why is a nation worshipping one God supposed to be far more civilized than one worshipping a dozen or a hundred? If ninety-nine of the latter are false, why is that not the case with the hundredth?

The great Islamic teachers in this country profess to show the tremendous superiority of their religion over the others by appealing to the teachings of Mahomed enshrined in the Koran, and to read some of their articles one would imagine that no possible answer to their claims could be made. There is a very good reason for this. It is simply that few people read the Koran just as few ever read the Bible. A full dose of either is a boring experience, but without going rigidly through both books, the average believer is apt to take for granted any statement made on their behalf. But apart altogether from the unmitigated nonsense which is found in the Koran, some of its so-called ethical teachings verge on the crazy quite as much as some of those emanating, we are told, from Jesus.

As far as one can gather Mahomed himself wrote or dictated his book, the wonder being how an illiterate man as he liked to call himself, could ever have written such a work. Mahomedans give this as one proof of its divine origin, and indeed they claim it was in existence from eternity. Mahomed got his chapters from the angel Gabriel when required, and this was predestined from the beginning of time. It is interesting to note that the angel paid Mahomed 24,000 visits, giving him various chapters of the Koran which were put into a chest, and after the prophet's death were collected by his successor, Abu Beer, and put into its present order by Zeid. Mahomed's principal amanuensis. This gentleman seems to have made a holy mess of arranging the chronological order of the work

so that it is almost impossible to know which chapters are really the first, that is, which were first written by Mahomed or Gabriel or Allah, for one can take his choice in the matter of authorship.

Mahomed had made during the course of his travels the acquaintance of various monks and Jews; it is, therefore, by no means surprising to find that at about forty years of age he commenced to have visions, and to hear God or his angels talking to him. In the sixth century the East seems to have been overrun by itinerant "holy" men, most of whom were always hearing the Lord, or the Virgin, or at least some deity, personally talking to them. These poor madmen made a great deal of their visions, and some of them made a great deal out of them too—much like the "pastors" of many of the extraordinary sects of Christians in our own day. Mahomed soon attracted attention and a number of followers, for the more stupid the visions, the more likely they will attract followers; but he seems at first to have had only a few of the faithful. All the same, he commenced a campaign against idolatry and scored some sanguinary successes in the course of years. After the fall of Mecca in 630 A.D., Mahomed was at the height of his glory though he only survived it two years.

Mahomed married a widow older than he was when twenty-five years of age; at her death he indulged in so many love adventures that in the end he married fifteen women and lived with eleven others, thus contradicting his own precepts in the Koran, which allows to the faithful no more than four wives. It should be pointed out, however, that whenever the prophet was in a difficulty over some woman, the angel Gabriel solved the problem for him by special verses for the Koran straight from Allah, though Mahomedans contend that their prophet was above the law he gave his followers.

The Koran is, like the Bible, full of contradictions. There is no doubt whatever that Mahomed was, at certain periods of his life, full of generous impulses towards "infidels"—that is, towards not only Jews and Christians who refused to recognize his prophetship, but also towards the idolatry which pervaded in certain Arab tribes. But his mission brought him many enemies, and he narrowly escaped death on several occasions. This embittered him and thenceforth he showed little love for those who differed from him. He advised his followers not to make friends with Jews or Christians, and even to kill idolaters. These are the verses which are brought forward by Christians to show how superior is their own religion—though they always take care either to hide the New Testament commands to hate, or they try to explain these away by insisting that when Jesus said hate he really meant love.

Mahomed, of course, opposed the doctrine of the Trinity, which roused the hatred of all good Christians and they never forgave him. Hence one must be very careful to check any pronouncement against Mahomedanism made by Christians. At the same time, when it comes to vengeance on unbelievers there seems very little difference between Allah and the Christian God. In fact, as far as condemning to eternal fire is concerned they are almost identical. Allah not only condemns infidels to burn for ever, but each time a fresh skin is formed it will be burnt off again. Heresy is considered a most terrible sin in Islam just as it is in Christianity. There is no difference between the precepts against it in the Koran and the claim made by both Luther and Calvin that magistrates have a right to put heretics to death. Heretics had very short shrift whenever Islam strongly prevailed—which shows how all these divine religions, professing monotheism and love, have much in common though they may be utterly different in outward ceremonial.

Books worth While

Cobbers Campaigning, by Dr. Thomas Wood; published by Jonathan Cape at 5s.

This book of Dr. Thomas Wood records his visits to Canada and Australia. It is quite un-like the ordinary travel book for Dr. Wood does not bother so much to describe places as to give his readers a better understanding of the types of the Anglo-Saxon race that are being developed in these young countries.

He is apparently a man without any prejudices who set out with a perfectly open mind. Unlike the traveller who growls that this or that must necessarily be wrong because it is not the same as we have in England, he expected to see differences and so was not surprised. He went prepared to like his hosts and naturally they liked him. He did not stay at the best Clubs seeking out famous people, but got in touch with all sorts and conditions of men—trappers, axe-men, shearers, farmers, miners; and the result is that he has given us the views of the *real* people of the country.

This book will give the reader a very good idea of the view-point of the men of the self-governing Dominions, not only on the war but on all subjects relating to their countries.

Dr. Wood sums up Australia as follows:—

Mistakes—plenty; wrong turnings—some; false values—a few; weak points—but who is free from them?; and problems still to be solved—yes. In Australia the British people have proved once more their youth, their vigour and their unmatched adaptability, and Australians have built a New World. Theirs is the fullness thereof.

Cobber, the first word of the title of this book, is the Australian word for "friend"—he evidently made great friends amongst them.

Of the Canadians he has just as great and healthy an admiration, but in Canada his stay was shorter. As he says himself, "I saw Australia by way of ships, boats, trams, cars and, even for a mile or two, on foot; and I saw Canada mostly from the air."

It is about time that people in England took the trouble to learn a little more about the British Empire. It is surprising to meet men and women who, on other matters are quite well-informed, who know practically nothing of the vast Britain that lies overseas. To read this book will help them a great deal to realize the vastness of countries like Australia and Canada.

Why France Fell. The lesson for us, published by the Union of Democratic Control, 34 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1; 6d., by post 7d.

In this booklet of 30 pages, compiled by the U.D.C., there is more matter than in many books of ten times the size.

As the writers truly say, "The collapse of France is only the culminating point so far of a great Fascist offensive, and the long retreat of democracy all over the world. It depends on us whether it will also mark the turn of the tide."

France fell because, as the writers point out, it had corrupt civil servants, judges, deputies and journalists. It had close family and financial ties with some of the Higher Command and the upper ranks of the clergy; and above all it was frightened of its own working people.

When a British woman M.P. at a Luncheon in Paris asked Monsieur Flandin, the reactionary ex-Premier, when talking of Spain, "Surely you cannot want France to have a Fascist Axis on your Southern Front as well?" Monsieur Flandin replied: "Why not—it's about the only way we can keep our workmen in order."

The French ruling classes were terrified that Hitler might be beaten. That this statement is not an exaggeration is proved by Laval's utterances after the betrayal. Speaking to the American correspondent, Mr. R. H. Knickerbocker, Laval said, "You exaggerate the importance of what is happening here. Hitler's real aim is to smash Bolshevism and the Soviet Union, and that is what really matters."

Since that betrayal, the Catholic Church saw an opportunity to muscle in, so, with the new Vichy Government the Marseillaise is banned, and a non-revolutionary National Anthem substituted. Also two-piece, knee-length bathing suits have been made compulsory for both men and women.

Men are known by the company they keep, and we must not forget that the men who betrayed France were the bosom friends and confidants of our Munich gang who, despite the resignation of their leader Chamberlain, still wield tremendous power in this country. For years Laval, Bonnet, Flandin, etc., with their counterparts here, sang in unison, "Dear Old Pals," and "The more we are together the happier we shall be." It is very significant too, how little real anger and condemnation of the betrayal of the French people has been displayed by Halifax and Co. A gentle chiding of "How could you" typical of Pecksniff at his best, was their only sentiment.

The lesson to be learnt by us in reading this book is that traitors are not the prerogative of any one country. We have them also as proved by the enthusiastic letters and utterances which appeared in our Press before the war from noble lords, retired generals, Tory politicians, and Captains of industry, praising Hitler to the skies, extolling the benefits of the Labour Slave Camps of Germany, the Strength through Joy Movement and all the rubbish associated with the Nazi regime. We are now told that these gentlemen have changed their views, but there is always the great danger that they may change them again.

Loss of Eden, by Douglas Brown and Christopher Serpell, published by Faber and Faber, 7s. 6d.

This is fiction and yet, the reader feels that it might very easily not have been. It is a story of the great betrayal, and of the occupation by Germany of this country—the wiping out of all our institutions and social habits, the tyranny of the Gestapo, the regimentation of all social life, are all told in a story by an imaginary New Zealand journalist who tells us what happened, or rather what might have happened, if the Munich gang had not had its wings clipped. It is so gripping that one forgets at times that it is fiction.

"It can't happen here," is a slogan that must be replaced by "It *must* not happen here," for it *could* happen here.

The story of France and Belgium *could* happen here if the same submersive forces were allowed to give full play to their treachery.

This book is founded on the history of what has happened in other countries during the last few years—the Nazi promises, their gestures of good-will; all made for the purpose of lulling people into a sense of false security and trust. The great point is, however, that it has not happened here, and that the German comes up against a peculiar streak of obstinacy in the British nature that he discovered in the last war. This time he will fight men even more determined, because we all know, except fools, what Fascism stands for.

An interesting book, and one that holds the reader's attention.

F. A. HORNIBROOK

Conclusions from the Study of Apes

(Concluded from page 653)

For insight Kohler has an excellent definition: "The appearance of a complex solution with reference to the whole lay-out of the field."

Sultan's pauses for reflection and head-scratching show him surveying the whole situation: what follows is a smooth continuous action which wins the objective, ideally involving movement directed to mid-objectives in a direction away from the final goal. When all these conditions are fulfilled there is no doubt whatever of the animals' purposive intent. We have "a complex solution with reference to the whole lay out," and not directed just to one part of it (e.g., the mid-objectives are of themselves not worth the ape's attention; he attends to them only as means to an end, and to do this he must first visualize that end.) Thus the solution is not built up piecemeal in the way of associationist psychology; the animal grasps the whole solution from the start, and his action forms a Gestalt, or whole.

Yerkes, who has worked on the orang, agrees with Kohler as to insight.

It finally remains to bring this concept of insight into the framework of a materialistic or naturalistic philosophy, for Kohler himself rejects vitalist hypotheses.

We are helped by the fact that the word means; with Gestalists, exactly what it says. In looking at things we are impressed with spatial relations, "near to," "farther than," "under," "over," "on," etc. It is difficult to see how the associationism of Mill and Spencer can explain these relations. Nevertheless Kohler accepts associationism in the lower status of a participating theory, and in the light of psychological experiment—to which the great Spencer was almost a stranger—he is right in making this limitation.

Generally speaking we may complain that the psychologists of Spencer's day were apt to regard psychology as something to be worked out on paper, and were rather contemptuous (with the famous exception of Wundt, who started the first psychological laboratory) of attempts to bring "the queen of the sciences" to the level of practical investigation. The great William James himself by far preferred to talk rather than experiment, but, growing uneasy in the recognition that experiment was necessary, he brought Munsterberg from Germany to Harvard to do the work.

What, then, to resume, is the mechanism by which the animal appreciates the relative position and size of things? How does he deal with all those relationships we express by prepositions? In the first place the retina is spread out spatially and grasps impressions as wholes. There are several clues to the perception of distance, such as the shape of the eyeball, shadow, foreshortening, superposition and the possession of two eyes.

Perception is thus not merely the acceptance but the interpenetration of sensory stimulus, with the whole nervous system acting in an integrated way. Misinterpretation in perception will bring *illusion*. When the association fibres are injured sense impressions often lose their meaning, as in cases of sensory aphasia. Once a problem has become correctly and adequately appreciated the resultant brain-drive, *thinking*, is the searching for the right answer. Imagining may similarly be described as the drive stimulated in order to satisfy needs, as in dreams.

The Gestalt psychologist, then, does not start with isolated reflexes like the Behaviourist. Just as the physicist finds his matter-units embedded in objects and not wandering about on their own, so the Gestaltist finds simple reflexes hidden away in more complex behaviour. The Behaviourist, of course, may claim

that his technique brings them to the surface, but as Gardner Murphy,* of Gestalt leaning, declares, no reflex ever functions independently of the rest of the body, and he quotes Sherrington's term for the simple reflex, a "convenient abstraction." Russell might call it a "logical fiction."

Thus, according to Murphy, "Psychology is the science which studies the interactions between living organisms and their environment," and mind "is a name for certain activities or organisms." (*Ibid*). Gestalt thus shares with Behaviorism a naturalistic approach to the subject. But Murphy would even put the simple reflex as a *later* product of evolution, offering the view that natural selection has shown a specialization (by maturation) from mass action to the capacity for reflex acts. It is certainly known that in some higher intellectual processes the brain functions as a whole, and according to Cannon's "margin of safety" has evolved reserve stocks for use, so as to avoid disaster when certain parts are impaired.

Every response, says the Gestaltist, should be studied in the light of the whole organism and environment, embracing both biological and social evolution. An organic drive to hunger, or a brain drive to curiosity or to interest in a problem, becomes modified by our capacity to learn from experience, and the results are woven into systems of habits. And just as the organism builds up a unified pattern of responses, so does the experience of one's own activities build up a subjectively unified pattern called self. "Self" is thus brought into the materialistic scheme, and includes both bodily and mental attributes; "soul" is worthless and obsolete.

As materialists, however, we should hardly be prepared to go to the extent of Janet (of psycho-analyst leaning), who, finding no natural tendency for ideas to become glued together in associationist fashion, employs the notion of "psychic tension," a capacity for synthesis, as the biological principle which sees to this work, and which in time of stress becomes broken up, giving the fixed idea and the obsession (cf., the Dickensian character Mr. Dick's constant concern for King Charles' head.)

Rather should we retain the notion of an emergent, built-up subjective pattern raised by natural selection.

G. H. TAYLOR

Before and After Flodden

SCOTTISH towns and villages must have been queer looking places in the reign of James IV. (1473-1513).

The towns had twisted, narrow streets into which were thrown all sorts of refuse, no such thing as sanitation being observed. Houses were built mostly of timber, roofed with thatch, with a hole in the middle large enough to admit of a human head being thrust through it. This hole acted as both chimney and window. In the Middle Ages fires were made in houses in a hole, or pit, in the centre of the floor under an opening in the roof. Such an opening for the emission of smoke is referred to by Herodotus, viii. 37.

Risk of having an open chimney dare not be taken until the fourteenth century, and chimneys did not become at all popular until the sixteenth century.

Glass was known in Egypt 1740 B.C.; Gregory of Tours (540-594) tells us that churches had coloured glass windows in the fourth century; and Æneas Sylvius (1405-1465) tells us that houses in Vienna had glass windows in 1458. Glass began to be manufactured in England in 1557.

The first window tax was made in 1695, and was in force until the Inhabited House Duty was imposed in its stead in 1851.

* *General Psychology*.

Farm houses, and workers cottages in the country were very badly built—worse than in the towns.

That man could be guilty of such blasphemy against the present and the visible as to build beautiful churches, in the fourth century, for a God who did not need them, and still be unable to build a decent dwelling for himself, one thousand years later, seems almost incredible!

To maintain ones health in such places would be a difficult task. To be ill—unthinkable! To sleep on "Clean pea strae" was then considered a luxury. Pillows were thought meet only for women in child-bed. As for servants, if they had sheets above them it was well, for seldom had they any under their bodies to keep them from pricking straws that run off through the canvas of the pallet and raised their hardened hides."

In the reign of James IV., people generally did not participate in those benefits which advancing knowledge blesses humanity with. But nearing the end of his reign a new era seemed to be dawning: the discovery of the art of printing, 1509; the coming of John Knox (1513-1572) and others, and, greatest of all, William Shakespeare; the translation of the Bible in the reign of James I. (1566-1625); in short the great advance, following these years, in Literature and Science, invention and discovery, aroused hope in every heart that human life was destined at length to become a free and glorious fellowship.

And yet, after four hundred years, cottages of farm workers have undergone little improvement beyond a chimney and a window!

But for the improved medical service which has nearly supplanted traditional remedies, the "Mickle Ail" might still be with us.

The "Mickle Ail" (Leprosy) was nearly dead in the reign of James IV. It was fairly common in the reign of James I. (1394-1437). But in the reign of James IV. ills were plentiful enough. And people could not afford the luxury of doctors. But saints took the place of Surgeons, and like the latter were divided into specialists; one cured toothache; another helped weak sight; St. Anne was the patron saint of lepers; St. Roche delivers from pestilence; St. Germain from apoplexy; St. Barbara preserves from lightning; St. Sebastian from the clothyard arrow; St. Bryde and St. Anthony preserve the cattle and swine, and St. Elroy the horses; madmen are brought great distances to be bound to St. Mungo's Cross at Glasgow to give them a sound mind; people who would have health of body must go to the East Neuk of Fife and kiss "the old cross of Craill," and so on.

The Priest had a special interest in death. He called, directly after it happened, to collect his "corpse present"—that is to say, the best cow which belonged to the deceased, or the uppermost cloth or covering of his bed, or the uppermost of his body clothes.

When the saints proved indifferent recourse was made to a skilful leech, who prescribed as follows:—

For the Ague.—Take two ounces of long pepper, two ounces of fennel seed, two ounces of anise seed, a living mole burnt to death. Bray all this as small as flour, and give the patient as much of it as will lie upon a shilling every morning, with four spoonfuls of warm ale.

For Fits.—The oil of swallows will work a cure.

For Ulcer on the Leg.—Apply a confection of frogs.

For Scrofula.—A decoction of the heads and tails of snakes.

Rheumatism.—Blood to be drawn from a healthy young man of twenty years of age, put into a glass vessel, and buried for sixteen days in horse dung, then distil and apply the product to the stiffened joints.

And when the leech failed the monks at the Abbey were resorted to. They distilled from herbs, roots, and other substances a variety of healing waters:

water of green hemp, good for headaches and gout; wallflower water, good for agues and stitches; nettle water, good for colic and "griefs" of the kidneys, for an old cold and shortness of breath; cherry water strengthens the eyes; gilliflower water is good for the frenetics and to comfort the brain; daisy water to procure a good appetite, and to profit broken bones; hazel nut water is efficacious against scale and pimple; water of rotten apples is excellent for red swellings, sores and cancers; water of dove's dung is good for the stone; bean water removes freckles and gives a soft, clear skin; water of honeycomb nourishes the growth of the hair, etc.

And after scanning the above, think how Hippocrates (460 B.C.), the father of medicine, the contemporary of Socrates and Plato; Galen (131-201), the famous Greek Physician, who left 83 treatises; and Paracelsus (1493-1541) the great Swiss physician, and many others, were all quietly annihilated by this skilful leech, aided by monks and saints in the reign of James IV.!

GEORGE WALLACE

Correspondence

SERVICE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Answer Mr. Du Cann's article with:—

Sinners and harlots enter into love and its kingdom first but become hypocrites.

Also the following, the reference to committing adultery with another woman is purely spiritual, meaning to join forces with evil—the evil beginning in the heart. There is no wrong in companionship when it is remembered that there is unity in spirit.

Because of the hard facts of men was divorce allowed; they would not allow love to reign, but allowed jealousy to crop up between. All can share one another when love—the spirit—love reigns, then divorce is not needed but are joined in one common bond—the marriage law and ceremony. Man is ignored and unnecessary, and in the beginning there was no marriage and divorce law. Love reigned and jealousy was non-existent.

It is not women but that which makes up the mind which has come between and produced divorce.

ETHEL KNIGHTON

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