

THE FREETHINKER

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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
"This Sun of York!"—The Editor - - - - -	733
Cassock and Comedy—Mimmermus - - - - -	734
A Contemporary Account of Tom Paine—A. W. Davis - - - - -	735
A Freethought Artist—H. Cutner - - - - -	736
A Conscientious Objector Objects—H. W. Reynolds - - - - -	740
The Clue to Corvo—S.H. - - - - -	741
Looking Backward—George Wallace - - - - -	742

Views and Opinions

"This Sun of York!"

DR. TEMPLE, Archbishop of York, is the second highest ecclesiastic in this country. His official salary of £10,000 enables him, in even these times, to face the income tax collector with a cheerful aspect, and his authority on things religious should be unquestionable—by believers. Personally, I have always taken him to be one of the intellectual men left in the church, although I admit that this is by way of being a left-handed compliment. In the land of the blind, the one-eyed man is king, and it may well be that a degree of intelligence that would call for no more than a mere acknowledgment in an educated layman, attracts marked attention when displayed by a dignitary of the church. One has only to think of the type of mind found in the Church little more than a century ago to realize the truth of what has just been said.

Dr. Temple has taken in hand the task of justifying the ways of God to man in connexion with the war. People, he says, are asking why God "permits and does not stop the war." That is not a very clever way of opening. For, if God *permits* the war, he would not be likely to stop it, and if he does not stop it he, from the Christian point of view, permits it. Anyway it is a religious question, not an Atheistic one. The Atheist does not say that God permitted the war; he does not believe that God does anything at all. He does not believe there is a God to do anything. It is the Christian who says this world was designed by God; it is the Christian who prays to God to stop the war and so saddles him with the responsibility for its continuance; it is the Christian who when he reads of more than usually ruthless bombing cries "Good God," with an unconscious emphasis on the "good." An Atheist may not be able to answer all the questions that may be asked, but he does not load himself or others with a number of unnecessary conundrums. What is called the "Problem of Pain," is created by Christians, and it is Christians who call upon Atheists to answer a puzzle invented by themselves.

For, as I have often pointed out, goodness is not a quality of gods in the early stage of their existence. Man does not believe in them because the gods are good, but just because they are gods, and it is dangerous not to do them homage. It is later, when he has developed enough to appreciate the social value of morality that he takes his gods in hand and forces upon them some sense of morality and justice. What the gods ask for is worship and the sustenance that worship brings. That is what the gods still hunger for, even when they have been made tolerable in decent human society. They still pour their favours

on those who worship them, and withhold gifts when that worship is denied.

* * *

God and Man

But the gods are gradually moralized—by man. They are reduced in number, and circumscribed in their influence, and gradually the religious problem of how to harmonize evil and *unmerited suffering* with the existence of an all-wise and all-powerful deity comes into being. The wisdom of God must be upheld, although there are occasional expressions of doubt, as in the case of Martin Luther, who scathingly refers to Satan getting the better of "poor half-witted God." But in that mass of incongruous stupidities known as Christianity we have the problem to some extent stabilized as it stands to-day. There was no need for Archbishop Temple to rush in again with an attempt to straighten things out, but it maybe that he felt liberties could be taken in a Sunday newspaper, and in any case the editor of the *Sunday Dispatch* might be relied on to protect him against any drastic or direct criticism. We have in this country a completely free press—with limitations.

Dr. Temple's first point is that Christ "foretold the occurrence of wars . . . until the Gospel was preached and practised throughout the world." That amounts to saying that war will continue in the world until such time as men have developed enough to do without it. I think we can agree with that, although its wisdom is not very startling in a man who has £10,000 a year for making the inconceivable clear. It is, however, quite clear that wars have not yet stopped, although the thesis that the long reign of Christianity has ended wars would not be a more extravagant thesis than the one by the preaching of which Dr. Temple earns his scanty living. Well, "the Gospel assumes man's freedom to obey or disobey the law of God. . . . If men chose to reject, they bring on themselves calamity (and) the nations before the war were not obeying the law of God." Well, whose law were they obeying? If Christian theism be true then all laws are God's laws. The law that if a man "lives righteously" he shall profit, and if he "lives unrighteously he shall suffer" (granting that things are so) are both God's laws—unless we assume that the Devil also has a set of "laws" of his own, and so is after all a co-governor of the universe. The Archbishop of York really must pay some attention to the consequences of his utterances. It will be noted that, so far, I have not questioned the truth of what Dr. Temple says, I have only pointed out what his statements mean. And up to the present we have reached the position that wars will cease when people have become Christians, but they will not become Christian until wars have ceased.

* * *

Evil and Good

Let us get on with this theory that the evil in the world is due to the (Christianly) impossible feat that man disobeyed "God's law." God made man with the freedom to obey or disobey. But whether man obeys or disobeys he does so as a consequence of choice, tendency, taste, judgment or some kind of preference for this or that. That seems indisputable. The make-up of Jack must differ in some respects from the make-up of Tom, or there would be no differ-

ence in their conduct. If Eve had never had a taste for apples, and Adam a tendency to be persuaded by his wife, there would never have been "sin" in the world. That, at least, is sound Christian theology. So the indisputably complete statement must run: God gave man a number of warring tendencies, knowing quite well that he would sometimes decide well and sometimes ill, until in the end he would have become so accustomed to doing the right thing that he would always do the right one. Why then did not God start man in the right way, and with finished tendencies? I do not pretend to know. It is the Archbishop's job to answer, and I am quite sure he will not reply. Fighting shy of direct and deadly questions is a cultivated habit with the clergy.

I see that Dr. Temple senses that a reply such as mine might be expected, and he sets up a defence thus: "If we start with what we think God ought to be and wants, we are making our own superficial feelings the standards for Him; and we ask for that sort of individual justice which secures to each man his deserts in pleasure and pain, or at least takes account of individual deserts in the allocation of pleasure and pain." Well, why not? Why the introduction of that "our superficial feelings." It is no more than a very artful attempt to divert attention from the indisputable fact that whatever conclusion we come to we have only our feelings and our reasonings by which to go. What else is Dr. Temple doing but judging by his feelings and his reason? I thoroughly believe that in this case his feelings and his judgments are very questionable, but he evidently does not wish us to come to that conclusion. This play on "superficial feelings" is so cheap and so dishonest a trick it should make any man ashamed of its use.

But the damnable feature of it all is that they who exert this mysterious quality of "free-will," are not those to whom the suffering is confined. What particular crime has the vast majority of sufferers from the war committed to deserve the fate that has overtaken them? Assume that the war is the consequence of the actions of kings and politicians, of financiers and plotters, of their criminal action and evil ambitions. It is these people who will suffer least. If kings are deposed they will retire to live in comfort in some country not their own. If statesmen are guilty of criminal blunders they may yet have monuments erected to their memory; if financiers lose some of their gains, they may have had the foresight to make preparation. But the masses of the people will be compelled to drain their bowl of misfortune to the dregs. And all because others have, as Dr. Temple would say, exercised their free-will and have expected God to act with the decency of a human being.

And the children? What has been their share in *producing* the war? How does the plea that such catastrophes as the war come about by the exercise of free-will, and therefore bring on themselves calamity, apply here? Dr. Temple faces this only to run away from it. He says that "one can hardly speak of it because it *hurts*." We do not question this, but it reminds us of the boy, who, when the father after thrashing him said "My boy, this hurts me as much as it does you," promptly replied, "But not in the same place." So our Archbishop falls back on another plea that practically negatives his main one. He dismisses the children—in spite of the admitted fact that the question *hurts*—by arguing, "the death of the innocent is not horrible, it is those who remain alive that suffer." Some of Dr. Temple's predecessors would have corrected him here, and argued that "worldly" innocence is no guarantee against hell. Dr. Temple seems to have thrown overboard altogether the doctrine of "original sin."

In any case we should be pleased to know why the statement that "the dead *are* dead, it is only the living who suffer," does not apply as completely to the grown-ups as it does to children. If the bombed child does not suffer, but only those to whom it belongs, why cannot we say that the dead adults do not suffer only the living ones? What becomes of the punishment the adults have incurred by their departure from God? What is the value of the thesis that the evils of man's actions are due to an exercise of choice, which has led him to select the good rather than the bad? The death of the bombed sinner has been instantaneous. There has been no time for repentance; there has been no consciousness of approaching death. He is, and, in the movement of an eye-

lid, has ceased to be. It is the people who are left that suffer.

So the Archbishop advances steadily from sophistry to stupidity; from inconsistency to incoherency. God does not save the innocent child and the excuse is that the child does not suffer. How far would that plea avail in the case of a man who was charged with child-murder? Would it be an adequate defence that the murdered child did not suffer? If not, why not?

In one passage Dr. Temple advances a very, very common plea. If God did away with suffering, "It would be taking out of life the chief opportunities of noble endurance." But endurance gives a qualified value only in the existence of suffering. If the suffering were not the endurance would be useless. So we must excuse God for introducing, or for permitting, a real evil because he has introduced a very questionable antidote for it! But when a man receives ten thousand a year for acting as a mouthpiece for God he must do something to earn his salt.

So we leave, for the times being, the second in command of God's British regiment of defenders. Forcefully he reminds one of Falstaff's "ragged regiment," but perhaps they were not quite so ragged a regiment as God's British contingent.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Cassock and Comedy

The need for a protective organization for ministers is very real, particularly in the case of curates.

Rev. R. Doble

Gold will knit and break religions.—*Shakespeare.*

THE announcement that curates are making yet another attempt to form a trade union, or a guild of employment, will provoke smiles. For curates, in spite of their alleged sacred calling, are usually regarded with amused tolerance. Dramatists and music-hall song-writers have made them the butt of their satire, and the audiences never seem to tire of the jest. It is all very ironic, for these long-faced young men take themselves so seriously as heaven-sent individuals commissioned by an alleged Celestial Power to acclaim a saucy world from naughty ways. Styling themselves "Reverend," wearing a distinctive dress, these young parsons have endeavoured to keep their sacred caste separate from the world of ordinary men and women. And now, fallen on evil days, these "sons of God" are playing the sedulous ape to the General Labourers' Union.

These curates, under the guiding hand of the Rev. Robert Doble, Vicar of St. Saviour's Church, Forest Hill, South London, are at long last beginning to look with longing eyes at the loaves and fishes of the higher clergy. Perhaps it is only natural that they should wake up and find that in a time of real trouble they are as much "on the shelf" as the most elderly spinsters of their congregations. In the race for the flesh-pots of Egypt the curates have been passed by the shop-assistants and the road-sweepers. Prayers may move mountains, but it takes so much more to move the hearts of the Lord's Spiritual and the Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Truly, it must be galling for the curates to see men of not superior ability living in palaces, legislating in the House of Lords, and drawing incomes varying from £2,000 to £15,000 yearly.

It has even been said that the poorer clergy are "starving." At least, that is how the Right Reverend Winnington-Ingram, a former Bishop of London put it, and he actually quoted the horrid instance of a parson who fed a whole family on sixpence a meal, and the still more distressing example of an unfortunate "Man-of-God," who lost whatever brains he possessed for want of a respectable bank-balance. It is very sad, but there is always balm in Gilead. That same Bishop of London generously collected over £50,000 from other people to protect the sacred persons of the clergy from the blessings of poverty. There were references in the news-

paper press that a minimum wage of five pounds weekly for these Sons-of-God was being aimed at.

But one might ask why these sacred fledglings should be in a condition of financial distress. The ancient ecclesiastical endowments of the Church of England are far more solid than the gold streets of the New Jerusalem, and they have never been invested in bucket-shop concerns. Lord Addington's return of 1891 showed that the annual value of these ancient ecclesiastical endowments was £5,469,171, exclusive of modern private benefactions, which then amounted to £284,000 a year.

Anyone who cares to consult Crockford's *Clerical Directory* can see at a glance that the average "reverend" enjoys a comfortable livelihood. In addition, he lives in a decent house, often larger than most of his neighbours. He has just as much, or as little, work as he likes to do, and if he chooses to spend three-fourths of each day reading or visiting, there is no one to say him nay. He can count on invitations to dinner and other hospitality all the year round, which is no small saving in the household expenses.

The higher ecclesiastics evade the blessings of poverty in a more skilful manner. Forty of the Bishops share £182,000 yearly. The Bishop of London enjoys a salary of £200 weekly, with a palace and a town house: an income sufficient to keep fifty working-class families in comparative comfort. Indeed, there are over three hundred bishops and suffragan bishops mostly enjoying four-figure salaries. The plain truth is that the Church of England is in proportion to its numbers the richest church in all Christendom. At the top are prelates with seats in the House of Lords, where they never do any good service for Democracy; and at the bottom are a multitude of holders of benefices far better off than the ordinary man. Even the curates do not come from the slums, but from sheltered homes capable of spending hundreds of pounds on their son's University training.

Within the narrow confines of the City of London proper £50,000 is spent annually in ministering to a small resident population of caretakers, City police, and Jewish people, the latter, who form a large proportion of the total, never trouble the pew-openers. The Church of England has property in the City of London worth £4,000,000, and rising in value. Nor is this all, for no less than nineteen of these City Churches have been earmarked as derelict, and steps taken to sell them and use the money in other ways.

Curates should be interested to know that the episcopal full dress costs £200. One fancies that a curate's wife could have stitched together something as good at less cost. Episcopal hospitality to the tune of thousands of pounds yearly should stagger the curates, for much bread, beef, and beer can be procured for a reasonable figure. But the best is only good enough for My Lords the Bishops. "The stair-carpet at Farnham Castle are measured by miles," wrote old Bishop Thorold. "My episcopal income goes in gardening," complained Bishop Stubbs. It is, indeed, a very far cry from the legendary fishing-nets of the original disciples to Lambeth Palace with its guard-room and its historic library; Fulham Palace with its pleasure grounds; Farnham Castle with its deer-park; and Wells with its moated garden. All these things are relics of the bad, old days when Hampton Court Palace was considered to be a suitable residence for a bachelor priest.

There is a way of providing money for curates, and even the badly paid vergers, organists, and choristers, which should find favour in the eyes of the devout bishops and Ecclesiastical Commissioners, one member of which belongs to the Labour Party. It is to act on Shakespeare's lines, adapted from *King Lear*:—

Take physic, pomp,
Expose thyself to feel what curates feel;
That thou may'st shake the superflux to them,
And show the heavens more just.

These pious employers of curates and others could easily afford to "show the heavens more just," and could, if they wished, prevent any of their employees from watering their bread with their tears. Perhaps an innate sense of modesty alone prevents them from depriving wealthy laymen of an opportunity for disbursing charity in such circumstances. One cannot think for a moment that the descendants of the Apostles could act so harshly with those who minister in their temples.

MIMNERMUS

A Contemporary Account of Tom Paine

I RECENTLY came across a book, published in 1906, entitled *France in 1802*, described in a series of contemporary letters, by Henry Redhead Yorke, edited and revised by J. A. C. Sykes, with an introduction by Richard Davey, in which I found some references to Thomas Paine, which might be of interest to *Freethinker* readers. Redhead Yorke was an enthusiastic young Liberal living in Paris, who welcomed the Revolution in its inception, but had to fly from France later when the terroristic system developed. In 1802 he returned to France and these letters describe his impressions. In the introduction Mr. Davey says:—

"He gives us a very interesting account of a conversation which he had with Tom Paine, whom he had known and admired previously, but whom he now discovered in a state of abject poverty on the very day that the American Republic determined to bring him back to his own country; where, however, he lived, after all his sufferings and misery in France, only two years."

Here follows extracts from Letter 41, p. 229 et seq. :—

The name of Tom Paine is familiar to every Englishman. Had I not been previously acquainted with him, I should have contrived an interview with him during my stay in Paris. Nearly ten years had elapsed since we were last together, and I felt deeply interested in learning his opinions concerning the French Revolution, after all the experiences so long a period of storms and convulsion must have afforded him. . . . Being at a loss how to proceed, I determined to enquire at the hotel of the American Minister, where I was informed that Paine lived at a bookseller's in the Rue du Théâtre Française, an American bookseller who inhabited No. 2. I immediately repaired to the house, and after mounting to the second storey was shown into a little dirty room, containing a small wooden table and two chairs. "This," said the portress who had guided me upstairs, "is Mr. Paine's room; he is taking a nap, but will be here presently." I never saw such a filthy apartment in the whole course of my life. The chimney hearth was a heap of dirt. . . . Three shelves were filled with pasteboard boxes, each labelled after the manner of a minister of Foreign Affairs; Correspondence Americaine, ditto Britannique—idem Française; Notices politiques, Le Citoyen Française, etc. In one corner of the room stood several large bars of iron, curiously shaped, and two large trunks; opposite the fire place a board covered with pamphlets and journals, having more the appearance of a dresser in a scullery than a sideboard. Such was the wretched habitation where I found Thomas Paine, one of the founders of the American Independence, whose extraordinary genius must ever command attention, and whose writings have summoned to action the minds of the most enlightened politicians of Europe! . . . After I had waited for a short time, Mr. Paine came downstairs, dressed in a long flannel gown. I was shocked by his altered appearance. Time seemed to have made dreadful ravages over his frame, and a settled melancholy was visible over his countenance. He pressed me by the hand, his countenance brightened as he recollected me, and a tear stole down his cheek. Nor was I less affected than himself. "Thus we are met once more, Mr. Paine, after a separation of ten years, and after we have both been severely weather-beaten."

"Aye," he replied, "and who would have thought that we should meet in Paris"; he continued with a smile of contempt, "They have shed blood enough for liberty, and now they have liberty in perfection; no honest man should live in this country; they do not and cannot understand the principles of free government. They have conquered half Europe only to make it more miserable than before." I replied that I thought much might yet be done for the Republic. "Republic," he exclaimed, "this is no Republic! I know of no Republic but that of

America, and that is the only place for men like you and me. It is my intention to return as soon as possible. For myself I renounce all European Politics." . . . In the course of our long conversation about America, he put into my hands, a letter written to him by Mr. Jefferson, the President of the United States. It was dictated with the freedom of an old friend. Mr. Jefferson began by congratulating Mr. Paine upon his determination to settle finally in the New World, for, he says, he will find on his return a favourable change in the political opinions of the citizens, who are happily come back to those enlightened principles which he, Mr. Paine, had so usefully contributed to spread over the world. As Mr. Paine had expressed a desire to return in a public manner, he states that the sloop of war which brought the Minister Livingston from France, would return at a given time and convey him to America if he could make it convenient to take advantage of the occasion. The rest of the letter is couched in terms of the warmest friendship, assuring Mr. Paine of a hearty reception. . . . I have often been in company of Mr. Paine since my arrival in Paris. I was surprised to find him quite indifferent about the public spirit in England or the influence of his doctrines upon his fellow-countrymen. Indeed he disliked the mention of the subject, and when one day I casually remarked that I had altered my opinions upon my principles, he said: "You certainly have the right to do so, but you cannot alter the nature of things; the French have alarmed all honest men, but still truth is truth." . . . I then hinted to him that his publication of the *Age of Reason* had lost him the good opinion of many Englishmen. He became uncommonly warm at this remark, and said he only published it "to inspire mankind with a higher idea of the Supreme Architect of the Universe, and to put an end to villainous imposture." He then broke out into violent invectives against Christianity, declaring at the same time his intense reverence for the Omnipotent Supreme Being. . . . It seems as if in proportion to his present listlessness in politics, his zeal in his religious or anti-religious opinions increases. . . . Wonderful and productive as his mechanical genius is, he assured me he never has read anything on the subject.

This he told me when showing me one day the beautiful models of two bridges he has devised. These models exhibit an extraordinary degree of skill and taste. They are wrought with extreme delicacy, entirely by his own hands. The longest is nearly four feet long; the iron work, the chains, and every other article belonging to it were forged and manufactured by himself. It is intended to be a model for a bridge to span the Delaware extending 480 feet, with a single arch. . . . The iron bars I noticed in the corner of his room are also forged by himself, and as the model of a new description of crane. He put them together and exhibited to me the power of a lever in a surprising degree.

This is the end of my quotations from Mr. Redhead Yorke's letters. At the end of the book Lady Sykes, the J. A. C. Sykes of the title page, has added biographies of a number of people mentioned in the said letters, and from her biography of Paine I extract the following. "At the same time a deputation of electors arrived from France to inform Paine that he had been elected a member of the Convention; flattered by this distinction he sailed at once for France. . . . As he could not speak French, he was unable to take part in the debates of the Convention; but when the King's trial took place he fought courageously against the death sentence, and caused the following expression of his opinions to be read aloud by one of his fellow-members. "To kill Louis would not only be a gross act of inhumanity, but also of insane folly. His death would augment the number of your enemies. If I could speak French I would now descend and appear as a humble suppliant before your bar imploring you in the name of my generous American brethren not to send Louis to execution." This generous action of Paine's completely destroyed his credit with the Jacobins, and also in a great measure his general popularity in France. The governing party were from this time his open enemies. He was arrested and imprisoned in the Luxemburg. Thomas Paine remained for more

than a year in prison in daily expectation of death. It was only by a mistake on the part of his gaoler in reading out the names of the condemned that he escaped execution." She goes on to say "The long imprisonment had not only affected his health, but also his intelligence. He published a work entitled the *Age of Reason*—a violent attack upon Christianity, which aroused a sensation in England, and evoked much energetic refutation of his teaching"!!

A. W. DAVIS

[The above article is published for its historic interest as supplying an explanation of the numerous slanders and misrepresentations, which supplied material for the enemies of Paine for many years. Readers of Conway's *Life of Paine* will need no warning that many of the above statements must be taken with reserve.—E.D.]

A Freethought Artist

II.

GOYA'S *Caprichos* are among the most subtle and savagely satirical works of art ever made. Leaving aside their astonishing power in drawing and invention, their unerring composition, their meaning is often difficult to fathom. It seems as if the artist deliberately made them so to put off the Inquisition blood-hounds who were ever ready to deal with heretics or those suspected of even the slightest leaning against the powers that were, religious or political.

Goya provided his own captions, often in very few words; and it is said he left a sort of longer commentary on each print. There are also other interpretations by those who are supposed to know what the etcher really meant. But there is no doubt whatever that he was attacking the terribly corrupt Court of Spain of his day, and more than that, the superstitious and credulous Church of Rome and its gang of ignorant priests. And in this he certainly was running a big risk. In fact, the Inquisition would have destroyed the plates and arrested Goya but for the intervention of the King, who felt, perhaps, that the Court painter deserved his protection—or perhaps it was because there was some talk of the King accepting the whole series of plates for his own collection.

As one of the latest Spanish authorities on Goya, Beruete, has remarked, the *Caprichos* can be divided into two parts—"in the first half Goya largely presents human beings acting more or less like demons; in the second half, demons act like human beings." An extremely interesting print is the one numbered 43—"The dream of reason sometimes produces monsters." It represents Goya asleep at his table with strange and monstrous birds around him, one of them holding a pencil as if inviting the artist to reproduce his dreams. One anonymous interpretation is, "Fantasy, without reason, produces monstrosities; united they give birth to true artists and create marvels." Of no one can this be said more truly, than of Goya.

All the competent critics of Goya's work—and books on the great Spanish artist continue to come out with unceasing regularity—turn with more and more admiration to the *Caprichos*, and they are almost unanimous in agreement on the underlying meaning of the plates. Muther points out that Goya "attacked all that he wished to attack: tyranny, superstition, intrigue, adultery, honour that is sold and beauty that lets itself be bought, the arrogance of the great and the degrading servility of the little." Thomas Craven, in *Men of Art*, says that "within the compass of a small piece of copper, Goya focusses his choleric antipathies, his understanding of evil, his universal scorn; in one small story he exposes the superstitious rubbish of old Spain." And one could go on quoting dozens of other writers.

Goya makes no pretence of his hatred of the priest; and the Inquisition rightly smelt a thorough heretic. In one of the latest works on the artist that by Charles

Moore, the author points out that the Inquisition strongly complained, "but without effect. And I have seen priests in Madrid, walking two by two in the Prado, looking at the original drawings from which many of the *Caprichos* were made, and chuckling over Goya's shrewdest thrusts." Moore quotes Muther:—

Satirical representations of popular superstitions, bitter, mordant attacks on the aristocracy, the government, all social conditions, unprecedented attacks on the crown, on religion and its doctrines, inexorable satires upon the Inquisition and all monastic orders make up the remarkable *Caprichos*.

As I have already stated, Goya never actually broke with the Church—or, except late in life, with Royalty. He always accepted commissions from both, and for this reason Moore will not believe Muther's suggestion "that Goya became a howling Atheist." But he admits that the artist "was fearless and unsparing in his satires on what was manifestly corrupt. The point is that there was no answering Goya, either."

So corrupt became the Court of Spain that, in a way, Goya welcomed the coming of Napoleon without quite seeing that the remedy might breed even worse evils. War was let loose on the Spanish people who, as almost always—compare the recent war—had to bear the brunt of the savagery of the invader. Goya brooded over what he saw, and the result was the most terrible series of prints ever made against the horrors of war. Though artists before him had also exposed war—like Jacques Callot—nobody had ever done so with the grim determination of Goya to show what the "glory" of battle really meant. As Moore says:—

The *Caprichos* were a prelude to perdition. The *Desastres de la Guerre* are a dance of death. In time of peace they seem stark and magnificent art. In time of war they are recalled again as the most brilliantly timeless pictures of war's dark back-wash any man has ever drawn. . . . There is a striking modernity about these plates Goya drew a century and a quarter ago. The flung heaps of bodies waiting the anonymity of a common grave might be the victims of one of those contemporary air raids that our age has perfected as the contribution to progress. . . . Goya shows you how men seem when they are having bayonets run through them, how they look when they have lost an arm, a leg, or the head. He shows the slumped posture of blindfold men tied to posts before the merciless, impersonal steel rifle barrels of the firing squads.

These terrible etchings stand out in Goya's work, and show him as a thinker, a Humanist, as an inflexible opponent of injustice and war. He had seen the enemy overrun his country, and the horror of it has come down to us with nothing softened; we know how true he has drawn for all time. If these prints had been graven in the hearts of the leaders of men as well as they were by the genius of Goya on copper, the world would never have seen another war. The *Desastres*, once seen, can never be forgotten.

Goya also painted, in unforgettable masterpieces, some of war's terrors with a realism which completely knocks off the lid of that hell of brutal savagery. I have never felt the slightest pity for the ultimate fate of Napoleon after I had looked through Goya's war etchings and paintings. I feel that we let him off too lightly.

As Goya grew older he became stone deaf, and it must have been a terrible handicap for the proud and independent spirit of the great artist. Between 1814 and 1819 when he was reaching his seventieth year and after, he worked on another series of etchings which he called *Disparates*, but now known as the *Proverbios*. Many of them again reach the high water mark of his genius as an artist, as well as in their subtle yet unmistakable satire. In them he once again attacked the Court of Spain and its religious hangers-on. But in the meantime Charles IV. had died, and his son Ferdinand had no use for such a savage critic as Goya in spite of the fact that the artist had painted him several times. Ferdinand seems to have been by common consent the worst King Spain ever had, and with such a reputation one need not be surprised to find Goya forced into exile. He went to France on an ostensible leave of six months when he was seventy-eight, still strong and ready for

work. He never in fact ceased painting portraits, and made as well some magnificent drawings of bull fights from memory. Two years later he returned to Spain; but he eventually went back to Bordeaux where, in 1828, he died.

As an artist, Goya stands with the great masters, his superb portraits and subject pictures ranking him with such painters as Rembrandt, Velasquez, Titian and Hals. In his etchings and aquatints he is unique as a creator, satirist, and Humanist. Superstition, credulity, injustice, barbarity—he hated them all, and for those who can read him, there is no mistaking his anticlerical, anti-Church attacks. Other artists may have shared his antipathies, and many of them no doubt did so. To Francisco Goya remains the honour of making known his ideas unmistakably in his work.

H. CUTNER

Believe it or Not

MOST people, even religious ones, would say that the age of miracles is past. But look at this, taken from the *Cork Weekly Examiner* for November 9. The news opens thus: "A priest who was executed by Spanish Reds is to-day alive, and an active official of his congregation." Of course that might mean the Rev. Father Preciado, C.M.F. was only sentenced to be executed, so all the "facts" are given. In the early days of the Civil War the priest was seized by the "Marxists," and after examination was taken outside Bilbao, stood on the edge of a sea-side cliff. He was shot, "the bullet entering his left eye and passing through his head." His body was then pushed over the cliff, but landed on a narrow ledge. Here he was seen by a passing farmer, taken to a hospital, and recovered quickly from his wounds. The priest now has "perfect sight in the left eye," the one through which the bullet passed, and has no "ill-effects whatever from his wounds." The bullet had passed through his eye without injuring it, and passed through his head with the same lack of consequence.

The recovery of the priest is explained when one reads that just when the bullet was about to enter the priest's eye and passing through his brains—no, skull—Father Preciado "fervently invoked the help of blessed Anthony M. Claret."

The mention of the name of the Saint Claret suggests something. Is "Claret" the local name for whisky, and was the whole a vision such as has so often been experienced by the followers of the true Church?

Perhaps two such hearty champions of the Holy Roman Church as Mr. Hilaire Belloc and Arnold Lunn, will tell us what they think of the thousands of Roman Catholics who will read and accept this wonderful experience of this Spanish priest. They might also explain why it is that in Ireland, where the Church is in power, these things appear in the press, but in this country they are kept out of the papers devoted to the true Church. Perhaps the English people have not yet achieved the spiritual purity of the Irish people. It is not for us to question the truth of the miracle narrated, only to suggest that the explanation of the above miracle maybe that there being nothing inside the priest's skull to impede the passage of the bullet may offer a scientific explanation of the miracle. That would, of course, rule out both Claret and other "spirits."

Finally, why do not Mr. Belloc and Cardinal Hinsley, suggest to Lord Halifax, and other religious members of the Cabinet, that a division of Roman Catholics be raised under the title of "The Clareteers"? Given the same kind of skulls as Father Preciado possessed, and carrying before them a bottle of the darkness that overspread Egypt, and a piece of the identical cross that Constantine saw in the heavens, Hitler and Co. might get such a shock that recovery would be impossible.

F. A. HORNIBROOK

Acid Drops

The heavenly vision of angels has turned up again, this time in Greece. The *Daily Mirror* of November 22 reports the following: A few days ago news spread through the South of Greece that Greek soldiers on a lonely parade on the Athenian front encountered a veiled figure in the darkness who, when challenged, threw aside her veil revealing the face of the Blessed Virgin. To the awe-struck soldiers the virgin declared "It is I, I will not forget to revenge myself through my Greek soldiers on my own day." Angels and virgins! They are getting quite plentiful. At least we have here an explanation of the Greek advance. And we believe this vision to be as true as any other vision of angels that has ever been seen. Good Christians should remember that the chief authority they have for the divinity of Jesus is the message of an angel. The Italians are "up agin it."

Our Government has released a number of Fascists from an internment camp, and has given as a reason for doing so that these—nearly all of them held positions in the Mosley army—were men of very inferior mental capacity. No one who has come into contact with the officials of the British Fascists, and more particularly the rank and file, will disagree with this statement. They had learned some kind of a lesson, and were quite ready to reel it off, but with complete absence of intelligent appreciation of what they were saying. A majority of those holding positions were plainly merely holding a job. Without the job they would soon have left the movement.

But when intellectual capacity is under consideration does anyone ever labour under the delusion that Sir Oswald Mosley is anything but a man of very small mental capacity? A deal of a clown, an ambitious clown, anxious to be taken as a born leader, his intellectual quality was hardly better than that of Hitler, who one day will be generally recognized as the fanatical fool he is, but whose chief value was to those who were behind him pulling the strings. It is almost impossible not to believe that many of our own "diplomats" must have recognized this, but it suited them not to trumpet it to the world.

And with regard to the release of these Fascists from internment camps because of their small mental capacity. People are not interned because they are of great mental capacity, but because they may be a great nuisance if they are at large. A man of small mentality may be just as dangerous in time of war, as a man of recognized mental power. We have in mind a little known saying of George Eliot's that while many sing the praises of intelligence, few pause to note the tremendous power of ignorance for evil. Ignorance can undo in a day what it has taken intelligence a generation to build up.

There has been a great deal of discussion of late as to a statement said to have been made by Mr. Kennedy, late U.S.A. Ambassador to Britain, that democracy would be *destroyed* in this country. We have no hesitation in saying that this is impossible. The simple reason for saying this so emphatically is that there has never yet been an established democracy in Britain. There have, of course, been democrats here, but no governing democracy. Democracy is far more a social than a political fact, and in this country we have not merely had, and have, an upper class, a lower class and a middle class, but the lower has looked up with deference to the higher, and the middle class has looked down upon the lower as a means of finding compensation for having looked up to the higher. No, we have not a democracy in this country to be destroyed. But we have the legal right to create a democracy, if we resolve so to do. We are content to let it go at that, and count it right well worth fighting for in order to maintain.

It is interesting to note that the favourite song with the people who go to the air-raid shelter in St. Martin's-in-the-Fields is "Annie Laurie." Of course, as this is a war for Christianity, it should be "Oh God our help in

ages past," or something of that kind, but perhaps the incongruity of singing about the protective power of God while crowding into a crypt and trusting to strong walls for protection from bombs might prove unpleasantly suggestive. The power of God is well out of the struggle, so far. And our political leaders who have joined in the cry that this is a war for the protection of Christianity, are far more energetic in crying for more guns and aeroplanes and ships and men than placing reliance upon God to lend a hand.

Bishop Lyons of Kilmore (Roman Catholic) says that this war is "not only a punishment but a warning." A punishment for whom? A warning to whom? Some of those who might be blamed for the war are dead. Others who are living and may come out of the war will be rewarded. We wonder whether this Bishop would dare to get in front of an English crowd watching the bodies of young children and old people being dragged out of a wrecked building and then say it was all a punishment or a warning? If he did he would probably be lynched, and most people would say: Serve him right. We do not know anything meaner, more contemptible, or criminal than this talk of war being God's judgment, or God's warning. If we called the Christian God a magnified criminal we should be accused of "vulgar" blasphemy. What else do these preachers really make their God? If it were true decent men and women would be terrified at spending eternity in the company of such a deity.

A thought for the day! Perhaps it is this kind of thing, which in one form or another is said by all the parsons of all the creeds, which will explain the destruction of the very large number of Churches destroyed. God may be getting his own back on those who slander him in order to keep their jobs.

Here are two gems from a letter to the *Times* written by the Head Master of Winchester School. Number one: "The storm which we are now facing shows what happens to a nation when it parts company with God." But how does anyone part company with anyone or anything with whom, or with which, they have never kept company? Or if we ever did keep company with God, how came it we lost so valuable an ally? It is as much the duty of God to hang on to us as it is ours to hang on to him. If a little child is taken out by its parent and the parent loses the child, is the parent acquitted of blame? It looks as though Spencer Leeson ought to team up with Mr. Middleton Murry.

Number two. If the "Christian faith is to triumph in England, those who believe it must agree to postpone their controversies and unite on the simple truths" on which all Christians are united. Hear, hear! But, a moment. What are these simple truths? The belief in God? But what God is like, what he wants of us, and what we ought to do is the thing about which Christians have always quarrelled. Is it belief in Jesus? But here, again, from the very time when Jesus is said to have died his followers were split up into warring cliques disputing, and fighting as to what Jesus said and what he meant if he said it. What is there that is understandable on which Christians are agreed? Head Master Leeson should try again. And if his lessons to the boys at Winchester are no better than his *Times* letter, then "God help them"; they will need help from someone or somewhere.

Mr. Middleton Murry's cry that Christ has been betrayed by the churches has "taken on," as such always will so far as they help to disguise the failure of Christianity. But after all, who is really responsible? Jesus was "God of very God." He came to earth for the express purpose of giving the world a new gospel. All Christians are agreed upon that. But this adventure of God occurred more than eighteen hundred years ago, ever since, his followers have been quarrelling—at times literally cutting one another's throats—because they could never agree as to what the devil the message meant. And God had to wait all these centuries for—above all men!—Mr. Murry to make clear to the world what Jesus Christ really meant? And Mr. Murry is not keen-witted enough to realize that his apology is a more deadly indictment of the whole story of Christianity than anything that we could say. Poor, muddled Mr. Murry!

TO CORRESPONDENTS

To Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—C. M. Beadnell, 8s.

THE General Secretary N.S.S. acknowledges the receipt of 8s. 6d. from Mr. W. Evans, and a parcel of clothing from Mr. F. W. Garley for the Benevolent Fund of the Society.

F. H. THOMAS (Cape Town).—Thanks for sending us the Paine quotation. It is well known and forms one of the opening passages of his stirring appeals to the American people.

H. LAMB.—We appreciate your concern. It is answered in the special article in this issue.

E. ARUNDELL-SMITH.—Thanks for cutting and good wishes. We do not think the Archbishop visualized *himself* as speaking a thousand years ago. More probably he was wishing that the people who listened had the mentality of a thousand years ago. It is not so much what he thinks as what other people are thinking that is of concern to him.

E. A. WILLIAMS.—Your experience is not an uncommon one. Nothing will more quickly get one into trouble with many of one's friends than the ability to see both sides of a question. The majority of people do not listen to the views of others in order to determine whether their own opinions are correct, so much as to receive confirmation of their own prejudices. That is one reason why mental progress is so slow.

J. HALL.—Thanks. Paper is being sent. See Paragraph.

S. EMERY.—Paine's reply on that head was conclusive. A "revelation" to one man is only hearsay to another. And religious revelations are, scientifically, cases of aberration to those who hear about it. Any sick man may describe his symptoms, but the diagnosis is the function of the doctor. We have never questioned the reality of the feelings that Christians experience. It is the interpretation of these feelings on which the dispute arises. We have worked this out in all phases of religion in our *Religion and Sex*.

W. MACDONALD.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks.

"66869" writes: In my opinion all citizens of this country should be liable for military service if it is considered necessary to have conscription. Then those who object to military service would be in a clear, unambiguous position . . . and the hypocrisy of allowing a privilege by law and then taking it away by tribunal would not be here to disgrace us. . . . I find myself opposed to Rear-Admiral Beadnell's position. The C.O. objects to obeying certain laws and will, if sincere and courageous accept punishment rather than conform. Whether right or wrong only the future can prove. . . . What would happen if we were all C.O.'s? We should presumably become a German colony. It would be a majority verdict, and any who disagreed with it would be Conscientious Objectors.

MR. A. SELLS says: Quoting the ants and the solar system appears stretching for comparisons. Conscientious objection to mass war and conscientious objection to fighting are two different matters, and must be separately dealt with. What your contributor needs is to study the case of the individual against the group. The individual has a case against the group, and this case gives the chief significance of human life.

ROYSTON H. LION.—Thanks for letter and address. Your argument is quite sound. Paper is being sent.

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.

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

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

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

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.

He who receives a Good Turn should never forget it; he who does one should never remember it.—Charron.

War Damage Fund

SINCE the bombing of the *Freethinker* office on September 16, I have had a number of enquiries as to when readers would have an opportunity of helping to make good the losses incurred. Some have taken the bull by the horns and, unasked, have forwarded donations. These will be publicly acknowledged in due course.

My reason for not making an appeal earlier is that I wished to make as complete a statement of the injury done as was possible. I am now able to say that the material damage done (excluding, of course, structural damages, which are the concern of the Landlord) to machinery, furniture, paper, books and pamphlets, with special expenses incurred owing to being "bombed out," amounts to just over £700. There is a further loss due to damage done to publications belonging to the Secular Society Ltd., but I am now concerned with the *Freethinker* loss only.

The Government *promises* compensation after the war, but the date of that era is unknown and the compensation incalculable. Perhaps some time in the future compensation of a sort may be forthcoming. The probability is that my successor will collect. I have neither the desire nor the prospect of being a centenarian.

I feel a little sore at having to again ask for help after the prompt and generous response made in September, 1939. I had hoped to carry on for some time unaided. But one cannot govern circumstances; one can only deal with them as they arise, and with such wisdom and foresight as one may possess. But apart from the loss due to bombing, the cost of production—wages, paper printing and general expenses—is steadily rising. And somehow or the other they have to be met.

So I have decided to open what I may call a "War Damage Fund" to bridge over the damage inflicted by the assault of the "enemy." I have every confidence that this appeal will be met with the same ready generosity that previous appeals have called forth. Of this readiness to help I have never had cause for complaint during the many years that I have had to steer our Freethought vessel through seas that have never been calm, and which to-day may be marked "stormy," and do not think I shall be disappointed on this occasion. We are doing our best at the front, but like another army, it is the reserves that say the last word in our war.

I am very pleased to say that the war has left the *Freethinker* absolutely untouched. The circulation is what it was, with a rising tendency. Our policy of sending copies of the paper free to members of the armed forces is making for us many new acquaintances, and I have every confidence that many of them will develop into warm friends.

The one thing that has suffered has been the sale of books. With houses likely to crumble at any moment, and the shifting of groups from here to there, book collecting does not hold out many temptations. But this state of things will not continue—certainly not beyond the war period.

I have decided to contribute to this fund, and for each year, so long as the war lasts, 15 per cent of my salary—roughly Twenty-five pounds per year. This will be acknowledged, with other donations in the first published list.

We are passing through a very trying time and the end is not yet. But individually and collectively we are getting on with our jobs, and getting over one batch of troubles encourages the attack on the next with a lighter heart. I have had all possible aid from those who were near and could help in getting over the immediate difficulties. I am now appealing to a wider circle. Of myself, I may say, for the benefit of my friends, that my health continues good, and I may

cut a new notch in my stick to mark the fact that this is the second time it has fallen to me to steer a Free-thought paper through a world war. That experience is not likely to be the lot of anyone after me. For a world-war must have a world in which to operate, and a third such occasion would likely blow humanity out of existence—and it would merit the fate.

All donations should be addressed to me at the *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E. C. 4. The first list of donations will appear in the *Freethinker* for December 15.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Sugar Plums

On Sunday next, December 15, Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Dixon Hall, Cathcart Road, Glasgow. His subject will be "Freethought, Religion, and the World Crisis." The subject should attract many who do not usually attend Freethought meetings, and we hope that many Christians and other religious folk will find their way to the meeting. This is Mr. Cohen's first lecture this season, although, as readers know, he has been more than usually busy. Doors will be open at 2.30; chair will be taken at 3 o'clock. This will enable all to get home before darkness sets in.

We have several times referred to the appreciative letters from those who have received free copies of the *Freethinker* since the war began. The following is a typical answer to our query as to whether we should send further copies:—

It is desired, and very much so, I've been mentally sick (unknown to anyone, of course, I'm A.I. in the records) for years, and it has been through inability to digest what has been served up to me in a monastery, a theological seminary, and a university. A few emetics like yours will be thoroughly appreciated. They are a bit painful at times, before the vomit, but I'm expected to be insensible to pain in my present capacity.

If a mere fraction of those to whom the *Freethinker* would be so welcome, could be "contacted"—to use the jargon of the day—it would send up our circulation to a bound.

Another letter from the "Forces"—

I have discovered that the officers in the army have not the slightest objection to a man being an Atheist, as I subscribed myself. But when you come to N.C.O.'s they often betray ignorance and try to persuade me that I must be "C. of B." or "R.C." Then I have to wear them down, refusing to be classed as such and telling them that if they've any objection we'll go and see the commanding officer. In the end they always yield, though with bad grace. I notice, incidentally, that the bombardier who made out my pay-book can't spell Atheist properly.

You know, Mr. Cohen, you should forget that man Halifax for a time and have a crack at Army Padres. I have never seen such a barefaced ramp in my life. The Padre gets his considerable pay for, apparently, an odd half hour's work a week. I can tell you this, in all honesty, that the only time we can see the Padre is for the service (which I do not attend) on Sundays. My impression is that the Army does not want him to do anything more than this, being probably as cynical of his value as we are.

One of the principal churches bombed at Coventry was that of St. Nicholas. A "pub" standing nearby was unharmed. A public notice informed all interested that services, including Holy Communion would, until further notice, be held in the Grapes Hotel. A correspondent, who sends us this item, suggests that if cheese and pickles and beer were provided the diet would be more appreciated than communion wine and sacramental wafers.

The West London Branch N.S.S. are holding a Social on Sunday next, December 15. It will be held in the house of Miss Woolston at 57 Warrington Crescent, W. 9, at 2.30 p.m. The house is quite near the Warwick Avenue Tube Station, and can also be reached by 6, 8, and 16 buses.

A Conscientious Objector Objects

With Esop's lion, Burns says, sore I feel
Each other blow, but damn that ass's heel!

Robert Burns

A RECENT issue of the *Freethinker* contained a lengthy attack on the Conscientious Objector, that poor unfortunate who is fair game for journalists, clergymen, armchair warriors, and indeed all who have a common residence in Coward's Castle. Perhaps a reply may be permitted from a Conscientious Objector, ex-gaol bird of the last war, whose two sons are Conscientious Objectors in this one.

A conscientious objection to war and to military service may be based on any one of a large number and variety of convictions, beliefs and motives. Moreover, conscientious objection has never been satisfactorily defined either by law or by the Tribunals. A great deal can be said about these considerations, obviously, but as Rear-Admiral Beadnell, the writer of the *Freethinker* article, shows no appreciation of the fact that they even exist, I do not feel called upon to go into them either.

I hope I am not doing the Admiral an injustice, but his main argument seems to be that the C.O. is a sinner against the great and cardinal principle of uniformity, and more particularly of Uniformity in the interests of the State. This sacred dogma is nowadays held so generally and in such high esteem, not only here but in Germany and Italy and elsewhere, that I should be indeed rash to question its validity; but I observe that Admiral Beadnell himself does not feel so sure of it towards the end of his article, for he speaks of the progressive advances traceable to single consciences and to minorities. Nothing succeeds like success, he says, from which I infer that once a crank like Galileo, Lenin, Hitler, or even the humble C.O., becomes top dog, men like Admiral Beadnell will be the first to take their caps off: but not, of course, until then.

To emphasize the necessity of the subordination of the minority to the majority, Admiral Beadnell turns, not to current history (for which I do not blame him), but to science. There are, it seems, some bodies in the Solar System, including two quite respectable planets, that will insist on going all over the place. Now admittedly that is very naughty of them, but we are not told that they are doing any harm, either to themselves or to the other bodies. The Admiral is evidently cross with them because they have no respect for Law and Order. Perhaps it escaped the Admiral's notice that this example is valid for application to a problem of human behaviour only if the Cosmic Law is the conscious edict of a super-universal Power. I have long suspected that many Freethinkers are theologians—and even Theists—at heart.

Next, the Conscientious Objector is admonished to contemplate the white ant, with particular reference to the inspiration he may derive from the harsh fate of the soldier ants who are left outside to die. I learn from this that discipline is a fine thing: and I also notice that Admiral Beadnell is still alive. Perhaps he managed to slip back through the last chink in the Termite City before it was closed up.

As regards the aggressive behaviour of our Stone Age forbears, what Admiral Beadnell says is news to me, and probably to many other people. It seems to me that here again the theologian comes uppermost, complete with the hoary doctrine of the Fall of Man.

If verbal disputation about Conscientious Objectors is to be conducted by means of illustrations and analogies, I will introduce one that may be more to the point. It is that of the human family. Children do not ask to be born into the world. They should appreciate what their

parents do for them, but there is no reason why they should take the view that their parents have done them a favour. The parent confers benefits that the children have no right to expect. And as for the peace-time benefits for which young men ought to feel so grateful that they should feel happy to die for a benevolent State, I wonder if readers remember a certain Army propaganda film which showed what benefits Conscription had conferred on the undernourished and narrow-chested boys from the distressed (sorry; special) areas? And how many readers drew the obvious moral that the State remembers its duty to human cattle when it wishes to fatten them for slaughter? Reverting to the family, I suggest that even if we grant that children should show a proper appreciation of their duty to their parents, they ought still to be entitled to refuse to steal from Woolworth's—and still more to commit murder—at their parent's command.

Why should the Conscientious Objector decline to avail himself of the benefits of the State? He does not choose his State, and has no say in its form. The State forces these benefits upon him and then says: You must get yourself killed out of sheer gratitude. In any case the question is pointless, for the State takes good care that the Objector has no alternative but to stay in the country.

This seems to be a suitable place to enter an emphatic protest against the demand that the Conscientious Objector alone must be logical and consistent. I do not find Christians in a hurry to go to heaven, or Imperialists to Canada (except when there is a war on). I do not expect to hear a single bombed-out patriot thank God that the bomb smashed his home instead of Clapham Junction or the gas works, or whatever it was aimed at. Let us have consistency all round, and be consistent about it.

Now let us run through Admiral Beadnell's article again, to see if we have missed anything.

1. What the Objector really objects to is to be killed himself. But a number of Objectors in the last war faced the death-sentence without flinching. Neither of these statements proves anything. Of what other belief or cause does one test the validity by reference to the desire or otherwise of its adherents to be killed?

2. Objectors belong mainly to the well-to-do classes. That statement is simply not true. Neither, for that matter, is it relevant. And I do not follow Admiral Beadnell's gibe at pro-foreign professors and doctrinaires. He has a right to disapprove of a professor, of course. So have I, but I do not put that forward as an argument for anything.

3. A Conscientious Objector, it is said, ought to fight against tyranny, intolerance, and what not. That is sheer question-begging. But suppose a Socialist soldier is told to fight against Russia, or an Irishman against Bire, or a trades-unionist against strikers? (These are by no means remote possibilities.) A C.O.'s conscience may be all that is said of it, but he does not hand it over to the keeping of the military authorities.

4. Lastly, Admiral Beadnell's "question in conclusion." Suppose we admit that the C.O.'s in the last war were hopelessly wrong. We were of no significance and were without influence. We were deprived by law of the vote in the 1918 Election, whose fruit was the Treaty of Versailles. Our opponents—the "patriots"—had it all their own way, clear for them to show that the war would produce what they said it would—the end of militarism, freedom for small nations, and all the earth one happy family. The Hun was hopelessly defeated and crushed. Now what have you to show for it? But the present war will put everything right. We shall have universal democracy and a New Social Order. Well, the road is yours: go ahead. Don't mind my cynicism. Eventually you will prove the Conscientious Objector to be wrong, if you have a sufficient number of righteous wars. Or will you?

And now, may I too ask "one question in conclusion"? If Admiral Beadnell were living in Germany to-day, would he be a Conscientious Objector?

H. W. REYNOLDS

The more honesty a man has, the less he affects the air of a saint.—*Lavater*.

The Clue to Corvo

I AM well aware that my title may seem to some readers unduly mysterious. Who, or what, or where, is Corvo? That is the question that many people may feel inclined to ask, and I must hasten to enlighten them. Corvo is the name which was assumed by Frederick Rolfe, one of the oddest of people in that period of odd people, the 'nineties of the last century. "Baron Corvo" was the name which he adopted for part of his topsy-turvy career, and out of his strange fate has come at least one book which seems of lasting value, Mr. A. J. A. Symons's *The Quest for Corvo*, the publication of which as a six-penny "Penguin Book" must be the excuse for my writing here and now.

"Baron Corvo," or Frederick William Rolfe, or Fr. Rolfe (he used to sign himself in all these ways, the last presumably being intended to indicate "Father Rolfe," for he once attempted to become a Roman Catholic priest, but failed) was a curious character who quarrelled with almost everyone with whom he came into contact. He wrote at any rate one noteworthy book, *Hadrian the Seventh*, which should be known to every Freethinker for its extremely interesting revelations of the inner working of the Papacy and of Papal institutions. Although Rolfe was a Roman Catholic convert, he loathed his fellow-religionists, on one occasion saying that he had never met a Roman Catholic, save one, who did not try to cheat him. Even R. H. Benson, that eminent priest and novelist, after proposing that he should write a book jointly with Rolfe, climbed down and tried to persuade the strange man that they would do better financially if the book were published in Benson's name alone.

But all these things are purely incidental to the eternal mystery at the heart of Rolfe's character. Always quarrelling, yet always contriving somehow to find new friends to put up money to assist him in some wild-cat scheme, he remains one of the queerest people in literature. I doubt if any writer of the most sensational fiction has told a stranger story than that contained in Mr. Symons's book. In fact, I can testify one thing to its credit—it kept me awake and interested one night when the London anti-aircraft barrage was booming away, and even the occasional whistle of a bomb in the vicinity did not stop me from going on with it to the end.

Still, I have called my article "The Clue to Corvo." What is the clue to the contortions of this man's character? Mr. Symons suggests that he was homo-sexual at a time when such things were even more fiercely frowned on than they are to-day. When one remembers that he tried through twenty long years to become a Roman Catholic priest this may well be agreed upon; in a celibate profession his sexual proclivities might not attract attention. But I do not think that is the whole story, by any means. There must be some other explanation, which we have not yet attained, and which may never be reached. An artist who painted banners and frescoes which his Church rejoiced to use; a writer of fantastic romances which somehow contrived to turn himself into his own hero; a would-be priest who, as was noted above, twisted his signature to suggest that he had succeeded where in actuality he had failed; yet a man who hated Roman Catholics and always suspected them of the basest motives. What psychological expert can make sense of that? It is true that his financial transactions were often not as straightforward as they should have been, for he had little idea of the value of money, and this led certain newspapers into making vicious attacks upon him. Possibly some embitterment arose from this, but the embitterment must have been there first in order that these attacks should have had so powerful an influence. After all, many literary men have been viciously, and often wrongfully, attacked and yet have remained calm and serene to their last days.

No; the clue to Corvo is still missing. I remain not altogether convinced by Mr. Symon's explanation of the man's character. But, all the same, I recommend *The*

Quest for Corvo to all readers who appreciate an unusual book. It is odd, and its very oddity attracts. Corvo was the strangest of men, and to try to fathom a character will be found a pleasant distraction these blitzkreig nights.

S.H.

Looking Backward

DOUBTS are frequently, and foolishly, expressed about progress. Because we have not yet beaten our swords into ploughshares; nor reached the Millenium; is taken for positive proof, by many, that progress is an illusion.

But even progress is not always desired. Alcuin (735-804), a learned Englishman, a disciple of Bede, an abbot who had 10,000 vassals, thought that be it ever so *filthy* there's no place like home. When invited to visit the palaces of Italy, he preferred his own smoky, dirty house.

Highlandmen, in honour of their guests, often destroyed their homes. In the fourteenth century, Colin Campbell, on receiving a visit from the O'Neills, of Ireland, ostentatiously burned down the home, at Inverary, on their departure. And, an Earl of Athol did likewise after entertaining the Papal Legate, under the pretext that it was "The constant habitude of the highlanders to set on fire in the morning the place which had lodged them the night before." But, "being crafty" these highlandmen, like the Apostle Paul, caught their guests with "guile" (2 Cor. xii. 16), for in truth a more drastic fumigation only was aimed at!

The population of England, at the Norman Conquest (1066), was only some 2,000,000. In 1377, it was 2,350,000, an increase of one-third of a million in 300 years. From 1377-1841, a period of 400 years, the population had increased to 15,000,000, or more than six times the population of 1377.

England once was slave ridden. The Anglo-Saxons had *live money*—"Sheep and slaves." The easy capture of the country by the Norman invaders was probably due to this.

Bondsmen, in the course of a century or two after the conquest, became free-labourers, and were recognized as such, in 1351, by the legislature. But slavery was not abolished till the time of Charles II. (1660-1685). As late as the year 1775 the colliers of Scotland were accounted *Ascriptie Glebe*—that is, as belonging to the estate or colliery where they were born and continued to work.

In the reign of Henry II. (1154-1189) numbers of the slaves of England were exported to Ireland. These slaves, or villeins, differed in the degree of oppression meted out to them. *Villeins in gross* were at the absolute disposal of the lord, transferable from one owner to another, like a horse or a cow. *Villeins regardant* were annexed to particular estates, etc.

Thomas à Becket (1118-1170) was deemed very fastidious because he had his parlour strewed every day with fresh straw.

Vassals, in those days, were bound to find straw for the King's bed. No electric blankets then!

Living under such conditions disease abounded. Matthew Paris (1195-1259) states that there were, in his time, 20,000 hospitals for lepers in Europe.

Travelling by land or sea could only be accomplished with difficulty. Many instances like the following two, might be given:—

(1) In the reign of Henry II. (1154-1189), his son William, returning from France, sought landing in England for three months.

(2) Queen Elizabeth, once refused to breakfast in Cambridge, because she had to travel twelve miles before she could come to the place—Hinchbrook—where she desired to sleep.

In 1360 the statute of labourers was confirmed, with new penalties, by which wages were not only controlled, but the way of spending them. In 1363 a law directed

that labourers, and all persons not worth 40s., must wear coarse russet cloth, and be served once a day with meat, or fish, and the offal of other vituals. Good fat meat was reserved for the rich. The lean and stinking were reserved for the poor.

Having food and raiment, said Paul, ye should therewith be content. Food, described above, was more or less available. Clothing, even of soldiers, was often deplorable. At Bannockburn (1314), for instance, the soldiers were "well near naked."

During the reign of Henry III. (1216-1272) the state of agriculture was so poor that laws were made to compel farmers "to till and sow their own lands, and calling upon every man to plant at least forty beans"—strongly recommended no doubt by a long sitting Parliamentary Committee!

In the reign of Edward III. (1327-1377) Colchester, the largest town in Essex, fifty-one miles from London, of great antiquity, famous for its oyster fishery, its silk manufacture, and for being the port of outlet of a large corn-growing district, had 359 houses of mud, without chimneys, in which people lived with pigs and cattle, eating and sleeping beside them, glad of their warmth. The dream of heaven indulged in by its inhabitants, then, had been more than realized in the Colchester of to-day.

Information such as the following, when found, seems like some rare historic jewel:—

"In the fourteenth century the whole stock of a carpenter's tools were valued at one shilling. They altogether consisted of two broad axes, one adge, a square, and a navegor or spoke-shave." And they made good use of them!

Erasmus (1466-1536), who visited England, complains that the nastiness of the people was the cause of the frequent plagues that destroyed them; their floors, he says, "are commonly of clay, strewed with rushes, under which lie unmolested a collection of beer, grease, fragments, bones, spittle, excrements of dogs and cats, and of every-thing that is nauseous."

Harrison says wheaten bread was reserved for the tables of the gentry, while artificers and labourers were "driven to content themselves with horse corn and beans, peason, oats, tares, and lentils." The average duration of life, at that period, was not half so long as it is to-day.

Household furniture, with the more wealthy, consisted of an occasional bed, a brass pot, and perhaps a towel. Of chairs and tables we hear nothing. Knives for cutting meat were in use, but not forks. Thomas Coryat, *Crudities*, 1611, tells how he had seen them being used in Germany and Italy. They came into universal use shortly after.

Houses were wattled and plastered over with clay; and all the furniture and utensils were of wood. People slept on straw pallets, with a log of wood for a pillow.

Of the 10,000 books issued in Europe between 1470-1500 England only contributed 141.

In the early part of the reign of Henry VIII. (1509-1547) not a cabbage, carrot, turnip, or other edible root grew in England.

At this period, wood was used for fuel by the rich. The poor plastered their homes with cow dung in summer, to peel it off for fuel in winter.

We learn from the Earl of Northumberland's household book, that his family was large enough to consume 160 gallons of mustard with their salt meat; and that only 70 ells of lincen were allowed for a year's consumption. (Shakespeare speaks of Falstaff's lincen shirts costing 8s. per ell). The Earl breakfasted on trenchers, and dined on pewter. Glass was so scarce, and valuable then (1567) it was taken out of the windows of the castle, and laid up in safety when the Earl was absent.

Queen Elizabeth was vain beyond all precedent. She left, to posterity, 3,000 gorgeous silk dresses.

In the beginning of the nineteenth century we had 200 offences for which a man could be hanged: for instance, stealing 5s., ubrning a rick of hay, etc. The penalty for stealing a pocket handkerchief, a pheasant, etc., was 7 years transportation. And every trial was undefended.

But, enough! Doubtters avaunt!

To doubt of either our material or mental progress is foolish. Our moral progress is rarely questioned, and that only admits of doubt.

Our material progress, as the above testimony proves,

admits of no doubt. Neither does our intellectual progress, though we have occasionally to take cover from some of its manifestations! But, of our moral progress: we have made practically none for 5,000 years.

Humanity is still in its moral infancy.

"The best is yet to be."—(Browning).

GEORGE WALLACE

Correspondence

PASTEUR

(From the Ghost of Pasteur)

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I have read Mr. Rostron's letter about myself in the *Freethinker* of November 24, 1940, and I am still wondering whether he is in need of mental treatment.

I was a biological chemist and physicist, being professor of chemistry at the Sorbonne from 1867-89. I formulated methods for the prevention of "diseases" in wines, beer, vinegar, etc., studied silkworm disease, isolated the bacillus of anthrax, and prepared vaccines for rabies and other diseases. And I am wondering whether it is rabies that your correspondent is suffering from.

My method of preserving wine, milk and other liquids from deterioration by heating is called pasteurization. I showed that sufficient heat killed all micro-organisms, so Mr. Thos. A. Rostron had better look out when he gets all steamed-up about science. If Mr. Rostron has ever done anything for mankind I should be very interested to hear of it.

LOUIS PASTEUR (transmitted through Donald Dale)

MR. BARBANELL AND PROFESSOR CROOKES

SIR,—I am aware that many of Crookes' utterances point to his full acceptance of Spiritualism. This is not surprising since he walked about the streets arm in arm with a lady ghost for an hour or two; this should be enough to correct anybody. And he innocently observed how solid she was. On the other hand, if Florrie Cook and Katie King were the same person (and there is not a jot of evidence to challenge this) then Crookes can hardly be called a first-class observer, and I should willingly throw him to the Spiritualist camp, but I classed him in reference to material in G. Whitehead's *Inquiry*. Being at the moment in a bookless corner of England I cannot consult the material I have met with, tending to show that Crookes sometimes had his doubts. In any case he is not of much value to any side, and was the laughing stock of some of his colleagues, who knew of his defective eyesight, which possibly led him into the Quixote expedition I have mentioned.

I thought the article might have offered a man such as Mr. Barbanell a more useful line of attack.

G. H. TAYLOR

CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTORS

SIR,—In your issue of November 17, a Surgeon Rear-Admiral has contributed an article which interested me because of his intolerance of any but his own brand of freethinking. I am one of the Conscientious Objectors to whom the Surgeon Rear-Admiral denies the right of free-thought.

"One fact," says he, "which militates especially against the inviolability of conscience is its almost complete dependency on the kind of upbringing to which its owner has been subjected." This accounts for our Surgeon Rear-Admiral.

"Does the Conscientious Objector ever seriously ask himself whether the conscience of his neighbour is as trustworthy as his own. . . (He does, and does the Surgeon Rear-Admiral always evade the same question?) . . . and whether the integrated consciences of the overwhelming majority of his fellow-men are not vastly more so?"

This is his own answer. "The heresy of one age is often the religion of the next; men of deep insight, looking far ahead of their time, succeed only because they win over to their way of thinking the majority; this achieved, the State follows suit."

On behalf of all Conscientious Objectors, I thank the Surgeon Rear-Admiral for the bouquet I have taken from his unwilling fingers, and for his succinct explanation of their aims.

The Surgeon Rear-Admiral puts a Pose in conclusion.

"Can Conscientious Objectors, or those who sympathize with and uphold their attitude justly declare that, were conscientious objection to be claimed as a right, and to be put into practice, at this present hour of our trial by all the peoples of the British Empire, it would not give the death blow to civilization as we know it; and that it would not place tyranny, intolerance, bestiality, and all that our people loathe, in the saddle with free rein to ride rough-shod over the subjugated nations of the globe?"

They do justly declare it. Modern war is the most barbaric, futile, destructive pestilence that can ever happen to a nation, and is the breeding ground of "tyranny, intolerance and bestiality." As to death blows, and saddles with free-rein and rough-shod riding the Surgeon Rear-Admiral has merely leapt astride his Rosinante to play havoc among the wind-mills.

W. S. SAWYER

SIR,—In your issue of 17th inst., Rear-Admiral Charles M. Beadnell deals with the "Fallacies of Conscientious Objection." The author certainly makes out a good case for the Unity of Nature. As described by him, the similarity of action in animate and inanimate objects, as arresting. Assuming that he believes in Freedom of Thought, does it follow that he believes in Freedom of Action? For himself? For others?

Admitting that man is a very imperfect animal, then the subject calls for tolerance and understanding. The poet might well have written "Man's intolerance to man makes countless thousands mourn."

S. GORDON HOGG

[We have received many more letters concerning "Conscientious Objectors" far more than we could print. Naturally nearly all traverse the same ground. So we are compelled to summarize the main points made, and that with the full length article should be adequate to the situation, and should end these letters both sides having been presented.—ED.]

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London, W.C.1) : 11.0, C. E. M. Joad, M.A., D.Lit.—"Civilization: What it Means."

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NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) : 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

CHESTER-LE-STREET (The Bridge) : 11.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

INDOOR

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Godwin Cafe, Godwin Street) : 7.15, A Lecture.

DARLINGTON (Labour Hall, Garden Street) : 3.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 3.0, Mr. E. H. Hassell, A Lecture.

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