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Views and Opinions

Public Opinion and Progress

THE recent display of Nazi hooliganism at Sir Oswald Mosley's Olympia meeting has done something to call attention to the need for the maintenance of order at public meetings. This is a point on which the *Free-thinker* has a greater right than most papers to speak, because it has uniformly protested against such disturbances, whether the offenders were Socialists, Communists, Conservatives, Catholics, Protestants, or non-Christians disturbing a public gathering. The only cause that is disgraced by such disorder is that represented by those who disturb. Incidentally, the disturbance may call closer attention by the more thoughtful to the character of this Mussolini-Hitler-Mosley campaign. A semi-military organization has a curious fascination for the less intelligent section of the population, no matter what it is connected with. The uniform and routine of the Salvation Army is an illustration of this, and in politics a military drill and military catch-words very often do duty for an intelligent grasp of political and social problems. Such terms as the *war of classes*, "*our fight*," "*maintenance of discipline*," etc., with the wearing of uniforms, have an irresistible fascination for immature minds, as is well understood by mature intelligences of the crafty kind. Of course, these terms may all be "*sublimated*," and applied to better uses and higher ideals, but this can hardly be held to apply to the wild beast show at Olympia. From scores who went merely as spectators there is testimony that the brutality there was calculated and deliberate. The only defenders of the knuckle-duster policy of the Mosleyites are the Rothermere Press, and German newspapers which write about Mosley's gallant stand against the "*Red Terror*" of London, and congratulates him on having thrown off disguise with regard to his anti-semitic policy. Nazism is all of a piece whether in Germany, Italy, or Britain.

Catchwords

So much is clear from a reading of last week's news, and I am not writing merely to repeat the obvious. A great many of the criticisms by responsible speakers and writers have repeated the familiar slogan that the "*British public will not stand*"—this or that. It is a very hard-worked phrase, universally used, with the necessary variation when it is said in other countries, and it helps to fill a gap between something the speaker thinks he has been thinking, and something of which he hopes will be passed for thinking. For my own part I regard it as a phrase that is untrue, and even dangerous. For I am firmly convinced that the British public, like the French public, and any other public, will swallow almost anything if the medicine is properly and carefully administered, and enough sugar is spread over the powder to hide its bitterness.

What is meant by public opinion? The other day the B.B.C. announcer said that French opinion welcomed the better understanding between France and Britain—to be followed immediately after by the statement that a number of French papers were anything but joyful about the understanding that had been reached. So it was clear that "*French opinion*" was at least *pro* and *con* on the subject, and one may safely assume that there is a great deal of French opinion that is neither one nor the other. The truth is, that there is no such thing as a fixed or even general "*public opinion*," whether we are thinking of Britain, France, or anywhere else. Even in Germany, where the only opinion that may find open expression is Fascist opinion, and where the rule is that of a dog-like obedience to official views, there is no such thing as a united public opinion. Public opinion, if by that is meant an opinion from which there is no dissent, simply does not exist. On every subject there are all sorts of opinions, *pro* and *con* and neutral, even though one opinion may be held by the majority. Even religion which, next to Fascism, calls for the smallest possible expenditure of intellectual activity among its followers, has never been to make public opinion more than the opinion of a section. "*Public opinion*" means to the politician, only the opinion of the majority. To the journalist of to-day it means, mostly, anything with a saleable value; to the man in the street it means anything, but usually nothing. And when the phrase is used by a historian or a sociologist it is often an offence of so great a gravity as to be labelled a crime against the community.

* * *

The Making of Opinion

Of far greater sociological importance is the recognition of the fact that public opinion will stand anything, provided suitable methods are adopted for its reception. Public opinion depends upon human nature, and it is one of the qualities of human nature that it is the most educable of all living things. That is at once the secret of man's strength, and of his

weakness. Without this man could never have advanced far beyond the development seen in the case of all gregarious animals. So far as man's animal structure is concerned it is to-day much that it was thousands of years ago. It is the capacity to form and express ideas, and the establishment of institutions that are passed on from generation to generation upon which human progress depends. Subject any society to the pressure of new ideas, and, given time, almost anything may result. The pressure of the West on the East is converting a comparatively peaceful people like the Chinese into a militarized nation. The pressure of a conquering France was mainly responsible for the spread of militarism over the whole of Germany. Subjected to the same social forces that played upon the Irish people, English settlers in Ireland became the most Irish of the Irish. "National" and "racial" characteristics, the stand-by of the unscientific historian and of the man-in-the-street unlightened by a knowledge of biological and psychological forces, are no more than the products of social and institutional life.

Wherever we look we get the same lesson. In a little more than a century public opinion in this country has held France to be our greatest enemy and our best friend. Russia has been by turns a danger to our civilization and our idealistic and religious ally, to become later an enemy to the human race. Slavery has been an indispensable condition of industrial life, and a disgrace to civilization. Religion was held by public opinion to be indispensable to morality and social order, and has become something the value of which it was left to every man to decide. Just over a century ago it was said that Englishmen would never submit to be ordered about by a number of officials. It is true that at the same time they were being compelled to live under disgraceful conditions, labour for long hours for a few shillings a week, and fed upon the poorest foods, but a trained "public opinion" finds it very easy to swallow contradictory theories and practices. Fifty years ago it was boasted that an Englishman's home was his castle, and its privacy was carefully guarded by law and tradition. To-day a government of shakes and shifts presents us with an Incitement to Disaffection Bill, which will most probably become law, and so place our homes at the mercy of a suspicious policeman and a not over-intelligent Justice of the Peace.

If a study of social life proves one thing it is that "public opinion" can be taught to tolerate anything, to admire anything, to submit to anything, so long as it is suitably educated in the required direction. The slave can be taught to value his chains, to thank those who place them round him, and even to take a pride in the decorative design of the shackles he wears. And it is all fundamentally part of the same process. Without this capacity for education man would never be where he is. He owes his freedom and his servitude, his dignity and his disgrace, his ability to rise as high as heaven and to sink as low as hell to the fact that his qualities admit of indefinite expansion in any direction. The same qualities that may make for the uplifting of the world may also be used to the world's undoing.

* * *

A Threat to Civilization

For these reasons I do not agree with those who are content to remain at ease and tell us that "British public opinion" will not stand this or that. Public opinion needs to be trained, educated, directed, and whether it makes for good or ill depends upon what lines it is directed. It is true that Fascism is against a considerable body of opinion, but so is the Incitement to Disaffection Bill, yet if it becomes law public opinion will settle down to it as it has settled down

to so many other retrogressive measures. England will never sanction conscription, it was said, but when a conscription Bill was passed in 1916, it was accepted, and when the next war comes along conscription will certainly be one of the first war-time measures. It is no more impossible to destroy liberty in this country than in any other. The time it will take to do so is entirely a question of how long it is required to break down resistance to new procedures, and it may take here a little longer than it has taken elsewhere, and a little greater cunning may be needed. But it can be done, and the regimentation of the people that has been going on for two or three generations—necessary as some of this was, and valuable as have been some of its consequences—together with the demoralization and brutalization caused by the war, has made the game of these international Nazi organizations the easier to play.

Public opinion is indispensable to the reformer and to the reactionary. And whether it serves the one or the other is a matter of who is the teacher, and if those who can teach the right are silent, then the people are being handed over to those who will teach them wrongly. What we need to bear in mind, all of us whether we be small or great, is that freedom is not something that has been achieved, is achieved, or ever will be achieved, but something the essence of which lies in the making, and that the institutions that are built to preserve it, the laws that are passed to protect it may be used to destroy it unless we are unceasing in our vigilance. Does not Hitler say he is giving the German people freedom? Does not Mosley, who has not even the capacity to vary his gramophonic message by a mere change in language, promise us freedom of speech when he is placed in control of the country? Of course, the freedom is to be given only to those who know what they are talking about, and who do not act so as to embarrass Mosley. But that is not an unusual qualification. Tyranny has usually been established in the name of freedom, and those who live under it are always exhorted to fight for it in defence of their liberties. I well remember soon after the war commenced seeing two men having a wrangle at an open-air meeting. One was comfortably fed and fairly well dressed. He was voicing some doubts about the wisdom of the war. The other man, who was objecting, looked as though a good meal was a stranger, and his clothes left much to be desired. But he was protecting his country against the invasion of the "uns. Most people would have seen in the raged one an incarnation of pure patriotism. I am afraid I thought only of the value of "public opinion," and how easily it is made.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Byron the Belligerent

"Broad ideas are hated by partial ideas, that is the struggle of progress."—*Victor Hugo.*

"The crime of inquiry is one which religion never has forgotten."—*Shelley.*

FEW authors ever impressed themselves more upon their contemporaries than Byron, who flashed through his brief life like a comet. An aristocrat, a man of illustrious descent, he championed the cause of the people. He was the Napoleon of passion and poetry, and, whilst Georgian England was actually scared of him, Europe admired him. When he died a soldier's death at Missolonghi, Byronism became a fashion. From Moscow to Madrid armies of young men lengthened their hair, shortened their collars, and were in love with poetry and their neighbours' wives. Both supremacy in genius and personality belong to Byron. Astonishing, perhaps, but what a man! what a poet!

There was nothing narrow nor insular in Byron. His rare genius crossed all frontiers. He aroused attention throughout the length and breadth of the old world. He moved the aged Goethe, and the youthful Victor Hugo. What, said Castelar, does Spain not owe to Byron? Mazzini sounded the same note for Italy. Sainte-Beuve, Stendhal, and Taine speak of his power in France. He was the intellectual parent of Pushkin and other Russian writers, and the revival of Polish literature dates from Byron. Eckermann, and others in Germany, help to complete the verdict of the Continent. Why? Byron was a great poet, and he was easy to understand. Dealing rhetorically with elemental emotions, he enjoyed the fame of being a rebel, an aristocrat in exile, and a champion of revolutionary ideas. Eloquence makes an enormous appeal, for it expresses with vigour the simple feelings of men. "Give me liberty or give me death!" "Man is born free; everywhere he is in chains." "These are the times that try men's souls!" That is the kind of thing, a sonorous and impassioned phrase flung out to thrill the hearts of thousands. Byron's verse possesses this rhetorical quality. Verse after verse reads like oratory, grandiose and sweeping:—

"Roll on, thou deep and dark blue ocean, roll!"

You can, in the mind's eye, see the outstretched arm, hear the resonant voice. The effect is enormous. Poem after poem has this oratorical note: Listen!

"The sword, the banner, and the field,
Glory and Greece, around me see,
The Spartan, borne upon his shield,
Was not more free."

There is music in it; the trumpets sing to battle. Nor is this all, for Byron had in addition a Voltairean gift of wit and satire; a command of mocking phrase and rhyme. The style was the man; there he was no poseur. All that was sincere in him became triumphant, and the writer of *Don Juan* is a deathless delight. At least he was a man as well as a poet. Like one of the Greek heroes he was youthful and resplendant. His swift, live pen challenged men. This man sang of Freedom, took up arms in her cause, and died in her defence. What would you have? Even stolid Britishers were captivated, whilst his heroic attitude fascinated a continent.

Byron was a rebel in matters of religion. His sympathy with the revolutionary spirit paved the way to Freethought, and he realized that all forms of faith are of equal uselessness:—

"Foul superstition, howsoc'er disguised—
Idol, saint, virgin, prophet, crescent, cross,
For whatever symbol thou art prized—
Thou sacerdotal gain, but general loss,
What from true worship's gold can separate thy dross?"

The Vision of Judgment, in which Byron's genius for satire has full force, is startling in its blasphemy. From its saucy opening, with the angels singing out of tune, to its close with old King George the Third practising a hymn, it is full of mordant criticism of the Christian Religion. In the preface to *Cain*, a poem as full of profanity as an egg is full of meat, Byron remarks, sardonically, that it is difficult to make the Devil "talk like a clergyman," and that he has endeavoured to restrain Satan within the bounds of "spiritual politeness."

Childe Harold is full of the revolutionary ideas of Rousseau, that same Jean Jacques whose books were condemned solemnly by the Archbishop of Paris. In this rarified atmosphere the petty religions of man all dwindle and disappear, "like snow upon the desert's dusty face":—

"Even gods must yield, religions take their turn;
'Twas Jove's, 'tis Mahomet's, and other creeds
Will rise with other years, till man shall learn
Vainly his incense soars, his victim bleeds,
Poor child of doubt and death, whose hope is built on reeds."

Byron may have dreamt, like so many poets, of immortality; he certainly did not believe in it. How finely he apostrophises this longing:—

"Still wilt thou dream on future joy and woe?
Regard and weigh yon dust before it flies,
That little word saith more than thousand homilies."

He uttered a predominant mood when he wrote:—
"Why, altars are the mountains and the ocean,
Earth, sea, stars, all that springs from the great whole
Who hath produced, and will receive my soul."

Leigh Hunt, his friend, says Byron was "an infidel by reading." Thomas Moore, who knew him well and wrote his life, admits that the poet was "to the last a sceptic"! Apparent as his heresies are in his poetry, his letters, particularly those to his friend, Hobhouse, show he was no Christian. In his correspondence with the Rev. Francis Hodgson, he is even more emphatic. His scepticism deepened as he grew older.

Few men so impressed themselves upon their generation. The sage Goethe said, "the like will never come again; he is inimitable." Our own Tennyson has told us that when Byron died it was as though the firmament had lost some mighty star, in whose vanishing the world was left to the blackness of night. When the star of Byron went flashing and glowing down the troubled skies, its sudden quenching afflicted men as with the sense of some elemental phenomenon.

MIMNERMUS.

The Myth of Corvo

It is strange how a trivial thing of no importance sometimes sticks in the memory, while things of real importance, which you wish to retain, fade away and are lost. This was borne in upon me on seeing a notice of a recently published book entitled *The Quest for Corvo*, by A. J. A. Symons (Cassells, 12s. 6d.). This at once brought back a memory of seeing a reference to a Baron Corvo in the *Freethinker* thirty years ago. I forget now what it was, but the impression made upon me was that of a mysterious character; this, and the curious name, stamped it upon my memory.

And the man was a mystery; he made himself mysterious by hints and suggestions, as, when his friend Holden read something out of a newspaper concerning the German Kaiser, he observed, "So my godfather has been at it again, has he?" He adopted the title Baron Corvo, to which he had no right whatever; a title, in fact which had no existence outside his own fertile imagination; and when this was exposed and abandoned, he reverted to his real name of Frederick Rolfe, but always signed himself Fr. Rolfe, as though he was Father Rolfe, a Catholic priest, which indeed he aspired to be. He made himself mysterious while he was alive, and he would have remained mysterious after his death if it had not been for the persistent and indefatigable labours of his biographer, Mr. Symons. No detective ever followed the trail more persistently, or successfully than Mr. Symons has done; his life has been traced from its beginning in the centre of London to its squalid end alone in Venice.

The life story of Rolfe is another illustration of the saying that fact is stranger than fiction, and the facts unfolded by Mr. Symons constitute a story as interesting as any novel, and true into the bargain. Mr. Symons was first attracted to the subject by reading a novel entitled *Hadrian the Seventh*, by Fr. Rolfe, lent to him by Mr. Millard, who had known Rolfe and possessed several of his letters. Mr. Symons was so impressed by the book, the letters, and the general air of mystery about the author, that he sought out and interviewed, or corresponded with, everyone—and they were many—who had known or had knowledge

about him, and the result is given in the strange story of *The Quest for Corvo*.

Frederick William Rolfe was born in Cheapside, July 22, 1860, the son of a piano manufacturer. He was sent to a good school where he received a sound classical education. From the first he was gifted and flighty, preferring drawing and enjoyment, but he made good progress when he chose to apply himself, and became a proficient scholar. He left school, much against his father's wish, when he was fifteen, for no reason except "waywardness and discontent," qualities which governed much of his conduct in after life. After idling for a time, he became an unattached student at Oxford—he afterwards claimed that he had been an undergraduate in the University, which was untrue—and cultivated the "Oxford accent" to the extreme, to impress people. Leaving Oxford he obtained a post as teacher at Grantham School. He then became a Roman Catholic at the age of twenty-six, being attracted by the more artistic service; to the great disappointment and disapproval of his relatives, who were staunch Dissenters. His great ambition now was to become a priest, and with a view to this he was sent to the Catholic College at Oscott, his fees being paid by the Catholic Bishop of Shrewsbury; here Rolfe developed a passion for painting, and covered the walls of his bedroom with religious subjects, it being noticed that all the hundred-and-forty-nine figures depicted bore the countenance of Frederick Rolfe. He was heralded as an Oxford man, but when it transpired that he was not a University man his stock fell badly. He sported fanciful meerschaum pipes, the largest of tobacco pouches, and was regarded by the older students as a swanker.

After nearly a year at Oscott he left, unlamented, the Bishop being dissatisfied with his progress and declining to pay for his hobby of painting. After this we hear of his starving in London; of another temporary tutorship, and then Archbishop Smith of Edinburgh was induced to take him up and send him to the Catholic Scots College at Rome, at the age of twenty-nine, again with the object of studying for the priesthood. Canon Carment, in answer to Mr. Symons, says that the first impression he made on them at the Scots College was his tendency to "swank" and talk in a vague way of the importance of his family. "In innumerable ways he said and did odd things both in and outside the college; he was not much interested in the course of studies being more devoted to painting, photography and composing triolets." His general laxity and carelessness lowered the tone of the college, and led to the question, "What is this man doing here?" After being six months at the College he was found to be quite unfitted for the priesthood and expelled. Canon Carment says, "There was in him little pride, in the better sense of the term. He did not disclaim to beg. In fact he seemed to consider that he had a right to expect assistance and favour from those in a position to grant them—I have heard him say so. As to gratitude—less said the better."

Rolfe never forgave his expulsion from the College and his rejection from the priesthood, and made bitter attacks on the Jesuits. After leaving the College, Rolfe was engaged as a tutor by the Duchess Sforza-Cesarini, an Old English Catholic lady with an Italian title—Rolfe having made the acquaintance of a scion of the house during his stay at Oscott—and was quartered in one of the ducal palaces; according to his own account later, as Keeper of the Archives. He is said to have obtained considerable sums of money from the Duchess, but his position, whatever it was, lasted only a few months, and at the beginning of 1891 he turns up at Christchurch in England, as Baron Corvo, a title, so he declared, attached to an estate conferred upon him by the Duchess, who seems to

have made him an allowance for a short period. He proclaimed himself an artist, and specimens of his frescoes still adorn the Catholic Church there.

But "Baron Corvo's" stay here was soon ended by an unfortunate financial transaction, in which the Baron proposed to buy a business and some freehold property from Mr. Gleeson White, who had befriended him, but when it came to the critical point of producing the money, there was none forthcoming. In the meanwhile, his debts were mounting skywards, the Duchess ceased paying her allowance, and one day "Baron Corvo" vanished, leaving his paintings, his brushes and his debts behind. Incidentally, while he was in Rome he incurred a debt for clothes to the tune of £20, and when questioned on the matter by his superior replied, "The man is fully paid really. He has seized a meerschaum pipe that I value at forty pounds." Wherever Rolfe went he left a trail of debts behind him. In Aberdeen, immediately after Christchurch, he lodged in the house of a hardworking tradesman, and ran up a debt of £32, and had to be forcibly ejected at last in his pyjamas, and his clothes thrown after him. It is a marvel how he escaped prosecution all the time.

Rolfe was highly gifted; his *Hadrian the Seventh* and other works proves that. He must also have had a very attractive personality, he was a good conversationalist, and could talk well on music, art, and literature, and had a fund of stories Italian and English. He attracted the attention and friendship of men like Shane Leslie, Pirie-Gordon, Hugh Benson, with whom he collaborated; Prof. Dawson and many others, but nobody could put up with him for long, and then they usually experienced his bitterest invective. He ended his life practising the vilest vices in the stews of Venice.

Here we have another instance of an intensely religious fervour coupled with utterly immoral conduct. He was passionately religious and without a vestige of morality. And then we are told that we cannot be moral without religion! A great many cannot be moral with it. The story of Corvo is well told and highly interesting.

W. MANN.

Wilberforce—and Others

(Concluded from page 358.)

MUCH nonsense has been written about that emotional crisis in Wilberforce's life called his "conversion." Whatever effect it may have had upon his relation to the deity he believed in, is of no importance whatever to anyone but himself. We are only interested therein because Christians continue to claim that Wilberforce's "conversion" was the cause of his interest in the Abolitionist movement. This is absolutely untrue.

Wilberforce's work on behalf of the negro was begun after Pitt had suggested to him that this was something worthy of his talents, after Lady Middleton had laid her plans before him, and after the Granville Sharp Committee had invited him to act as its spokesman. There are two further considerations which constitute evidence against the Christian allegation. If Wilberforce's own statements are true (they are not proved to our satisfaction, but they are much to the front in the *Life*), Wilberforce wrote in 1773, and in 1780 to 1781, correspondence, which, if his own and his biographers' statements can be believed, proved that he was an ardent abolitionist many years before his conversion.

That is one side of the case. It may not be true. No documents appear in this tremendous compilation to prove the stories, but if it is true, it disposes finally of the legend. But what is absolutely authenticated is that Wilberforce's "conversion" had immediate and most Christian results. It brought him to an attitude of mind which we might have expected. As Winwood Reade says, "He soon showed that in another age he might have made an excellent Inquisitor." (*The Martyrdom of Man*, Chap. 3.)

The "first-fruits" of Wilberforce's conversion consisted in his establishing a Society "to hunt up indecent and blasphemous publications," and his throwing his whole energies into an early and worse Comstock agitation. The words of Wilberforce are perfectly definite: "God has set before me as my object the reformation of my country's manners" (*Life*, Vol. I., p. 139). His subsequent addition to his God-given principles include a reference to his later devotion to enfranchisement which only adds to the clarity of his "conversion" programme.

His biographers have very fully explored all his diaries, correspondence, and doings and sayings at this "conversion" period. They could not unearth a single word to hint even remotely that God's personal revelation or his own resolves connected with his conversion, included any kind of reference to negro or other slavery. The only thing that needed God and Wilberforce to suppress was such work as Thomas Paine wrote—Paine, the greatest of all those pioneers of emancipation.

Winwood Reade all too charitably rejoiced that Wilberforce "happily turned his attention to the slave trade," as if henceforth Wilberforce's work was all for liberty. Not so. The intolerant and retrograde spirit of Wilberforce never left him. Besides, the organization he founded continued its vile deeds while Wilberforce was bodily absent. Wilberforce himself was always allied with the enemies of freedom, except where the negro slave was concerned.

If a man is known by the company he keeps, Wilberforce would be judged less favourably than he deserves. He always consorted with the foes rather than the friends of Abolition. To be fair we should say that Wilberforce chose all his friends for their Christian prejudices, and ignored their detestation of all liberty.

Wilberforce quotes praises of Rev. George Whitefield without protest, and he chose of all people, "the very calm and pleasing John Newton" as the father-confessor of his adult conversion. As unlikely a pair of friends for an abolitionist as one could imagine. While the Quakers were excluding slave-owners from the Society of Friends, Wilberforce was eulogizing Lord Nelson, glorifying his victories, but still more Nelson's unctuous piety.

Nelson did not return the compliment; he described in plain frankness his opinion of "the damnable and cursed doctrine of Wilberforce and his hypocritical allies." (*The Monthly Repository*, 1807).

A later and friendly biographer of Wilberforce says, "In judgment he sometimes erred, in politics he was unduly conservative, but in piety he was clear and constant." (W. J. Jenkins). Wilberforce's view of the Peterloo massacre was that the Magistrates were perfectly right, and the people wrong. "The true reason for the bloodshed was the irreligious temper of the reformers."

The Seditious Bill had naturally an enthusiastic supporter in Wilberforce. Wholesale suspensions of the Habeas Corpus Act were always defended, Wilberforce blaming the victims rather than the authorities.

"As well," he says, "might the invaders of the property of others complain of infringements on their liberty rendered indispensable by the enormity of their aggressions." No wonder fellow Members called him "the Honourable and Religious Member."

Liberal Christians looked on him with dismay when in 1790 Fox moved for the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, which stipulated that all persons holding official posts must be Church of England communicants. Wilberforce and the bishops defeated Fox.

Clarkson he maligned, patronized or ignored according as occasion suggested. Sir Samuel Romilly, the noblest of all his co-workers, Wilberforce ignored for ten years. Romilly was the greatest man in Wilberforce's Parliamentary day. His fame may die, perhaps he is unremembered by most of us, but his humanitarian influence in reforming the criminal law has literally saved thousands of human lives in this country. But, of course, Romilly was like Voltaire and Paine, a Freethinker.

Wilberforce hated revolutionary France so bitterly that he never gave her credit for her own revolutionary emancipation of slaves in all her Colonies—an example Wilberforce might have been proud to admit as well as to follow. His anti-French bias bears some analogy to the anti-Soviet bigotry which leads to such ridiculous reactions to-day. Apart from his many illnesses, Wilberforce deliberately delayed all abolitionist activities at times, because he looked with bigoted eyes on all Freethinkers. He endeavoured to keep his movement free from the contaminating influence of these ever-constant friends of religious freedom, as well as other forms of freedom.

He hated Paine with unmitigated disapproval. He was in favour of the suppression of *The Rights of Man*, which he called "a mischievous book." *The Age of Reason* he called "poison." Neither he nor his biographers understood the vast educational work for liberty these Freethinkers and radicals were doing. "It is certainly true," Wilberforce admitted, "that these Jacobins are all friendly to abolition, but this operates to the injury of our cause." This is just what a religionist of his type would say.

Wilberforce passed over in silence the industrial system, which in his day was becoming more and more revolting to human feeling. Child labour and a hundred forms of slavery in England never moved him. "He failed to understand," says another writer, "the miseries of little boys almost as black as his negro clients, who were burned and broken in sweeping chimneys."

It is terrible but true to say of Wilberforce that he never knew the meaning of gratitude to, or appreciation of, the men and women who worked before and with him for abolishing slavery. William Hazlitt (in *The Spirit of the Age*), says: "Mr. Wilberforce said too little of one, compared with whom he was but the frontispiece to that great chapter in the history of the world—the mask, the varnishing, the painting. The man that effected it by Herculean labours of body, and equally gigantic labours of mind was Clarkson."

And Clarkson knew that he was but one of a long line of torch-bearers; that many men and women had worked in many ways, and shall still continue to work until mankind is fully free.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

SOFT AND—HARD

The softer attractions of the weaker sex have often been inspired by a hard heart, and administered to the victim with a heavy hand.

Religion and History

ONE of the more serious counts in the indictment of supernaturalism is its devastating effect upon history. The original inclusion of superstitious matter into the records of thought and action may be accounted a natural result of the occult obsession of ancient peoples. But the relapse to this practice—after the Greeks and Romans had achieved a considerable measure of emancipation from the earlier “intellectual bondage to religion and to old ideas”—calls for some explanation.

From the works of historians who deal with the development of their subject, we gather that the ancient Hebrews made the first notable approach to the more continuous form of historical narrative; but the matter (the earlier books of the Bible) was largely spurious— theological, mythical, legendary. Herodotus (about 480-430 B.C.) wrote continuous history; but this was similarly defective, events being referred to the will of the gods, oracles, and the like. A generation later Thucydides produced real, naturalistic, more or less critical history. So also did some other Greeks and some Romans. But, following the establishment of Christianity, and of the Bible as an authoritative record of world events, history, in any tolerable sense of the word, disappeared.

In the Middle Ages, writes Dr. Gooch, in the introduction to his *History and Historians of the Nineteenth Century*, “History was a sermon . . . an exercise in Christian evidences.” Orosius (round about 415 A.D.) at the instigation of Augustine prepared *Seven Books of History Against the Pagans*. This production, says Professor Robinson (*The New History*), “became the standard manual of universal history for a thousand years. . . . History thus became for Orosius and for innumerable readers in succeeding centuries the story of God’s punishment for sin and the curse which man’s original transgression has brought upon the whole earth.” The general result is also pointed out by Professor Shotwell (*An Introduction to the History of History*): “Orosius’ polemical pamphlet served to distort Europe’s vision of the past for a thousand years.” And to this we must add Robinson’s statement that “the most reckless and sensational sermon of a professional revivalist of the present day would be as reliable a source of objective truth as he.”

Then followed the long dark age of gross superstition and almost unbelievable general credulity. Some useful records were made. But among them we find accounts by the German chronicler Eckkehardt (at the time of the Crusades) of a fight between two knights in the air, when one, who bore a cross, vanquished the other; of persons being divinely imprinted with the sign of the cross on their bodies or clothes, and of a newly-born child who could talk. And the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle includes the following in a record of the visit of Henry II. to Peterboro’ in 1127: “Let no one think lightly of the marvel we are about to relate as a truth, for it was well known all over the country. . . . As soon as he came there . . . several persons saw and heard many hunters hunting in the air.” (This fondness for levitation presumably resulted from the old belief in “ascension” or “translation,” and seems to survive in Spiritualism.)

Improvement was made from the fourteenth century through to the end of the seventeenth history remained predominantly ecclesiastical. Then, more than twenty centuries after its original advent, genuine, rational history re-arose, and developed into the “scientific history” of to-day.

In spite, however, of the advance, we still suffer from obscurantism in this department. Probably only one recognized historian writes (as he did in a B.B.C. pamphlet), or thinks, of “a God who is the Lord of History.” But in many historical works we find far too much about religion. Animadversion on the cruel treatment of the Hebrews by the Assyrians and Babylonians is usually set forth, but often we find no mention of the persecution, extending to wholesale massacre, with vile treachery, of other religionists by the Hebrews, or by Christians of “Pagans” and of one another.

Breasted and Robinson (both American historians) set a fairly good example nearly twenty years ago in their associated books, *Ancient Times* and *Medieval and*

Modern Times. I have, in a former article, quoted Breasted’s words about “bloody butchery practised by Elijah’s followers.” And in his book neither the ancient Hebrews nor Christianity has the usual long chapter or chapters exclusively devoted to them.

Robinson, in a number of passages, briefly points out the abominable persecution of later times, and its effect upon society. As regards the Albigensian “Crusade,” preached by Pope Innocent III. in 1208, we read the following: “An army marched from Northern France into the doomed region, and after one of the most atrocious and bloody wars on record, suppressed the heresy by wholesale slaughter. At the same time, the war checked the civilization and destroyed the prosperity of the most enlightened portion of France.” Again, referring to the condition of affairs in Spain in the tenth century (“which was so dark a period in the rest of Europe”), Robinson writes: “Unfortunately, the most industrious, skilful and thrifty among the inhabitants of Spain, that is, the Moors and Jews . . . were bitterly persecuted by the Christians”; and “the persecution diminished or disheartened the most useful and enterprising portion of the Spanish people, and permanently crippled the country.”

So far as I have been able to ascertain, no British (professional) historian has followed these two writers to any appreciable extent, though in two or three historical works by educationalists I have found some admiration of the real state of things in relation to the rise and spread of Christianity, as well as its disastrous effect on education from Roman times onward. It is therefore necessary to persist in calling attention to defects of omission or commission, or both, by writers who violate important canons of scientific history by presenting the usual partial and partisan, and therefore misleading, view of religious affairs.

J. REEVES.

Acid Drops

The Rev. Benson Perkins is quite at home in denouncing that singularly harmless, if rather dull amusement known as “a little flutter.” Talking about the Irish Sweep, he rightly says, “the most serious consequences come to those who win.” We regret these delightful “serious consequences” do not come our way. Mr. Perkins says that, even if you lose, “it is separating men from God,” so there seem to be more consolation prizes than we imagined.

The membership figures given in the *Methodist Recorder* are worth glancing at. The whole Methodist membership as reported to the Synods last week shows a decreased membership of 5,361, in the adult section, and a decrease of 6,295 juniors. Against these heavy decreases the only counterbalancing statistics are the very dubious “On Trial,” the “may-be’s” and the “some day’s”; these only show 1,142 increase. This leaves a net decrease of over 10,000 in one denomination. If other churches were equally frank, we should see many signs of encouragement during the current “May Meetings.”

What a lot of unconscious humour there is in many Christian apologetics. The Rev. A. E. Baker, in the course of an article in the *Church Times*, for June 8, says that there is one thing that suggests “divine revelation” in the Christian tradition. It is this:—

The Hebrews were at an unusually low level of civilization. When they came into a country civilized achievement degenerated; tools, buildings, pottery, everything. When they were established they were more backward than their neighbours.

But it was in this environment that there occurred “the remarkable succession of great reformers, pioneers, poets—a miraculous succession—whom we call the Prophets.” Perhaps Mr. Baker is merely poking fun at the Christian theory, that it was these people who saved the world, or that there could have come from such an environment, a procession of reformers, pioneers, etc. And does not the New Testament say something about the impossibility

of getting grapes from thistles? Yes, we fancy Mr. Baker has a rather sly humour, and is exercising it to make a terrific attack on the Christian tradition.

How these Christians love "to dwell together in unity." There is talk of a "combine" between the Presbyterian and the Congregational divisions of God's One True Church on Earth! With equal tact and charity, thus speaks the Moderator of the English Presbyterian Assembly: "If and when any incorporating takes place, it will be by the Congregationalists becoming Presbyterians, and not by the Presbyterians becoming Congregationalists. "Over my dead body" as it were. Dr. Archibald Alexander is a REAL Presbyterian.

When will Christians make up their mind what they believe. On the question of Hell, for example. Intelligent spectators know that the Churches DARE not say plainly that the Bible, the creeds, and all Christians of every Church until lately were wrong, and Hell is non-existent. At least half the Christian world believes still in undiluted Hell. Millions of other Christians play dishonestly with the "word," while the "thing" is completely discarded from their individual creed. The *body*, as in Detective tales, has not finally been disposed of. A *British Weekly* editorial, speaking of the late war, calls the latter, "Hell—not the merely theological hell, but a place of fire and brimstone." That happy phrase "a merely theological hell" is as good as "a wife in the sight of God."

Modernism is easily misunderstood. Rev. Dr. Bradford, of Downham Market, is worried because a correspondent imagined this Modernist to be a disbeliever in the Divinity of Christ. We too were similarly guilty. The indignant vicar "explains." "Modernism," he says is "opposed to Fundamentalism," and "The Modernist proclaims Christ in the light of modern knowledge." Apparently the Modernist is against all forms of superstition which he does not share. Fundamentalists believe that Jesus was God. Modernists believe in the Divinity of Christ. Now it is all clear.

Christian Members of Parliament are often insufferable. Mr. Joseph Leckie, for instance, wants to regard the "Holy Land" as a sacred preserve for English Christians. He claims the right of his own sect to override justice, law, local government, and scientific irrigation in a land which does not even belong to England. After denouncing the beneficent work now approaching completion in Palestine, Mr. Leckie claims that "Christian people must insist that the Sea of Galilee shall remain substantially as it is, and that no tampering with its present level shall be permitted." Christian people, indeed! The Jews and the Muslims in a Mandated Territory, are in need of water, and are taking proper steps to secure its supplies, but a few foreign sentimentalists "must insist" on frustrating them.

"Christian pacifism" is defended by Rev. J. W. Stevenson in a religious weekly. The main difference between any reform or movement is that the religious variety places its sectarian prejudices before the cause which it qualifies by its prefix "Christian." Mr. Stevenson shows where he belongs by his inept phrases, perfectly correct in a church, but utterly out of harmony with peace. The Christian Pacifists "become an instrument of redemption in the hands of God." "Behind the Cross we see the Kingdom, the Power and the Glory." So did Torquemada and Napoleon! When will Christians see that "God's hands" are less important than human intelligences, and that we want human peace by human co-operation, not "the kingdom, the power, and the glory under the cross."

We understand that the Churches are making determined efforts to "dig themselves in," while they may with all the public educational bodies in the country. According to the *British Weekly*, which seems to have surrendered to the enemy, "a suggestion has been made

in responsible quarters, that the Churches should provide a Board for examining the suitability of teachers for undertaking religious instruction." This is the most reactionary educational proposal made since 1870. It is accompanied by plans to make religion a "compulsory subject" in all sorts of irrelevant examinations, to cover secondary schools as well as training colleges. Evidently the Churches calculate that an electorate which is supine about the Seditions Bill will accept any and every betrayal of dearly bought liberty.

Things that might have been better expressed. A South London clergyman, bidding farewell to his flock seemed to suggest that he had sheared them well in the course of his years of ministry. He said: "I have been, greatly enriched by my sojourn amongst you." He must have been referring to "spiritual gifts," not like the pick-pocket who asked the judge to let him "sojourn amongst" the spectators in order to collect the rather heavy fine imposed on him.

Blackwood's for June contains a lively account of George Psalmanasar, whose literary and other frauds created a sensation in the eighteenth century. To deceive a Bishop of London was easy perhaps, but Dr. Samuel Johnson thought he knew a man through and through. He told Mrs. Piozzi that "George Psalmanasar was the best man he ever had known." So easy is it for humbug mingled with piety to deceive pious people. George was born of Catholic French parents, and received a "perfect" religious education, at a Jesuit College and the university. He was tempted by a clergyman named Innes who seems to have made a handsome profit out of George's frauds. Innes foisted him on to the Bishop and the public as a "convert" from Formosa. He translated the Catechism and other pious literature into "Formosan," and wrote big books about Formosa (which he had never seen). The Rev. Innes must have been a "card." He is described as having "an insurmountable propensity to wine and women, and when fraught with the former, fell immoderately foul on the latter."

Dean Inge, who is President of the Modern Churchman's Union, is said to be the most "advanced" thinker in the Church of to-day. It is not easy to understand the significance of the adjective or the noun, except as indicating the state of intelligence in the church generally. Dean Inge, in St. Paul's, on Whit-Sunday, proclaimed his belief in the personality of the "Holy Ghost," of whose sex even this "advanced" "thinker" is assured. "He is our Advocate and Helper," said the Dean, "Our Friend in need, whatever dangers threaten us." The Dean's language embodies almost word for word the prayers of Central Australian aborigines when calling on the (Holy) Spirit of a dead ancestor (the Mura-muras). C. H. Spurgeon and Billy Sunday were not more "Fundamentalistic."

Last week we had many (contradictory) definitions of the "Holy Spirit." The latest is that of Rev. James Reid, D.D., who knows the "Spirit" so intimately, that he is able to tell us in all confidence that "The Spirit of Christ has many windows through which He can shine." A sort of Crystal Palace apparently.

Balaam is said to have double-crossed Balak, who invited him to curse Jacob. Balaam blessed him instead. Sir Alfred Davies was surely invited to bless "Foreign Missions" at the "Changing East" Exhibition recently. The report says, "Sir Alfred's speech was always combative and lively." He had the audacity to quote Coleridge's lines:—

"A wild and dream-like trade of blood and guile,
Too foolish for a tear, too wicked for a smile."

On the other hand a most "sympathetic" speech was made (naturally) by Mr. D. O. Evans, M.P., who happens to be the chief administrative director of one of the largest international trading concerns in the world, the Mond Nickel Co., Ltd. He was invited to bless, and he did.

Dr. J. D. Jones, a local congregational minister in a fashionable seaside resort, has peculiarly clerical ideas as to what constitutes "decency," and as to what would "affront" decent people. "I am no stickler for clerical attire," he rather contradictorily claimed, "but there are certain decencies which ought to be observed." Incredible as it may seem, the Rev. J.D. was not thinking of Unemployment or Housing Shortage or Dear Food. No, he was shocked at seeing a minister dressed like a human being.

We learn from our estimable exchange, the *Truth Seeker* of New York, that the Ingersoll Memorial at Washington, is held up mainly by the bigoted protest of Representative Woolcot of Michigan. This Christian who disgraces the name of a State so intimately connected with Abraham Lincoln, says, "I don't think that kind of man should have a monument in the national capital." The first three words of Mr. Woolcot's utterance are true enough.

The *Daily Herald* articles on "Bibleland," lack Mr. Morton's usual zest. The kiddies for whom they are written will find much more fun in the huge posters which advertise the articles. In the gaudiest of colours they see not only the "Holy Land," but the author and other gentlemen, presumably Christ and a few assorted disciples. We doubt if the children will be deceived. Mr. Morton is travelling in A.D. 1934, not in A.D. 34. If only the *Herald* could guarantee a Holy Land tour "personally conducted," by Christ and an apostle or two, Lourdes and Rome would turn green with envy.

We note that one of the latest books on Christianity—*A Gospel of Modernism*, by the Rev. R. D. Richardson—definitely rejects the Virgin Birth and the Resurrection. Freethought seems to have had a good hand here, and it now only remains for the Modernists to reject the Miracles and the Crucifixion, and put the story of Jesus on a par with the story of Aladdin. The Christianity that will be left then, might be called Modernism, but a crowd of people would call it by another name. Still a rose smells as sweet whatever it is called.

Hitler's friends are now busy publishing books, not only in his support, but also boosting up the German nation much as was done before 1914. Here are two precious passages from *Der Christliche Staatsmann*: "Germany is the mother of all nations," and, "Look at the marching German youth and realize that they have been created by God. Warfare is their art and ruling their profession." And Spengler in *Verlag*, says: "The real internationalism is imperialism. It is the ruling over the entire world of but one creative principal, not by adjustments and concessions, but by victory and extermination." Victory and extermination seem to have been prerogatives always of people specially created by God, but it is good to know that even the Chosen ones are sometimes defeated. Before 1914, the militaristic German was boasting much in the same way, and fortunately, many of his kidney were wiped out. His descendants prefer to boast on paper, and the "war" is against the Jews who cannot strike back. We wonder what Schiller and Goethe would have thought of these Nazi writers!

Mr. Sidney Dark declared the other day, before the Christian Industrial Fellowship, that "if there is no Christian revolution in the affairs of mankind, there most assuredly will be an anti-Christian revolution." We can assure Mr. Dark that there is a very big anti-Christian revolution going on now under his very nose. For example, Mr. Parsons, one of the other speakers, as a result of his "wealth of experience as a missionary," declared that "men's minds are more concerned with moral questions than with matters of Christian evidence." People without work, or food, are certainly not interested in the thousand and one books written to prove the authenticity of the Gospels, or whether Jericho really was blown down by the trumpets of priests.

Another speaker, however, the Rev. P. T. R. Kirk, insisted that Our Lord was "the sanest economist who ever walked this earth," and he specially commended the

daily study of the Bible and the Sermon of the Mount. We always thought that Jesus was the greatest of all Spiritualists, Mediums, Orators, Poets, Socialists, Fascists, Humorists, Men of Sorrows, Vegetarians, and many other things. We can now add to our long list that he was also the sanest of all Economists.

The Rev. Father Andrew, S.D.C., in a recent sermon, said that on Trinity Sunday, "there is a call to remember that God is our strength, and that the God is our Redeemer." He continued: "Trinity Sunday! Three persons in one God! Is it a tangle? What does it mean?" It was a wonderful opportunity to elucidate the simple arithmetical problem, but instead, the Rev. Father insisted that no "human mind could comprehend the incomprehensible mystery of the being of God," the doctrine being "beyond our finite understanding." We fully agree, but of what earthly use is this "incomprehensible mystery?" What is the difference between the man who believes it, and the man who does not?

Father A. Goodman has attacked a group of statuary raised as a memorial to the Anzacs in Sydney. It seems that in the group there is a nude woman on a cross—signifying, according to the sculptor, "the gentle figure of peace crucified on the war standard of Mars." This seems reasonable enough, but sex-phobia forms part and parcel of the make-up of most Catholic priests, and Fr. Goodman is horrified at the nude. In addition, he is angry that anybody else should be represented crucified but the "Divine Redeemer." We seem to remember that the first representations of Jesus was a lamb on the cross, or on something like a cross and, in any case, it is sheer impudence on the part of Christians to claim the cross as reserved entirely for their particular deity. The cross was a Pagan symbol, and quite possibly is derived from phallic worship. We hope the sculptor of the group and those responsible for its erection will insist on these priests minding their own business.

At his Diocesan Conference the other week, the Bishop of Bradford put in a strong plea for more and better Sunday schools. He seems to have no doubt whatever that they teach children to become loyal Churchmen. It seems rather curious, however, that since Sunday Schools were instituted, "loyal" Churchmen have certainly declined in numbers. If the schools had been a success surely there would not have been this constant whining about the failure of real Christianity and the utter indifference of most people in the land to the Church and its affairs. Besides, the Roman Catholic Church, which has few Sunday Schools, seems to be thriving pretty well without them. The truth is, of course, that children with the least smattering of science, must laugh to themselves when they are told to believe most of the Bible stories on the mere word of a youthful Sunday School teacher, or even on the word of a gaitered Bishop. How is the Bishop of Bradford going to prove the truth of the story of Joshua and the Sun or Jonah and the Whale?

Fifty Years Ago

SIR GEORGE GREY, the foremost statesman of New Zealand, once publicly declared that "justice had not been done to the natives" by the Minister of Lands. The natives complain that they have been wrongfully dispossessed of the soil, and that the agreements made with them by the various Governments have invariably been broken whenever the Christian Legislature have found them to be too irksome to be kept. Their appeals have been in vain. Christian ears have ever been as deaf to their cries as the ears of God's chosen people were to the shrieks and death-groans of the Canaanites whose land God had commanded them to steal. God, of course, must be on the side of the Christian. Why trouble then about the poor Maori, or Zulu, or Indian, or other modern representative of the Canaanitish nations, when God so evidently and manifestly intends that they shall be dispossessed of their territory in favour of true believers?

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Sugar Plums

How have the mighty fallen! In the Hours of Marriage Act, Parliament increased the time during which marriages could be contracted as from eight in the morning until six in the evening—thus narrowing the margin of safety for bachelors. In the meeting of the Southern Convocation, the Archbishop of Canterbury explained that this was done without his knowledge and without consulting him. Shame! Parliament had evidently forgotten that for centuries the Church held the sole right and power to perform marriages, and that at one time there were thousands of men and women living together who could not be legally married, because they could not get married without the Church and would not get married with it. And now the hours during which marriages may be contracted are altered without informing the Archbishop of Canterbury about, or even asking his opinion about it. Shame!

But in his statement the Archbishop, advising Convocation that it would have to alter the hours of marriage in accordance with the new law, admitted, what we have so often pointed out, that there is no such thing as a religious marriage in this country that is legally recognized. There is a marriage with religious ceremonies, but the essence of English marriage is a legal contract before officials appointed by the State to act. Whether that official is an ordinary Registrar, or whether he holds in addition to being a Registrar, the position of a parson, matters nothing at all. It is as the man licenced by the State to perform a marriage ceremony that he acts. The Archbishop said they could not refuse to carry out the new arrangements, being "recognized marriage officers of the State." This should do something to kill the stupid phrase "religious marriage," there is no such (legal) thing in England. It is the secular contract that is the legal essence of the marriage.

The Bishop of London said that the earlier hours for marriage were appointed so that people would come to Church sober. And this in times when the Church had everything its own way! Dear! Dear! Dear!

There is one thing worth noting in connexion with the Mosley Fascist circus at Olympia, with which we deal in another part of this issue. It is generally assumed in the press, and also in the speeches in the House of Commons that it is a question of a fight between Communists and Fascists. This is playing directly into the hands of the Fascists. The opponents of Fascism are not merely Communists, and the majority of the protests against the Chicagoan methods of the Fascists came from people who were very far removed from Communists. For the purpose of this subject it is as well for all to understand that the question is not Communism versus Fascism, but between Fascism and those who have a strong objection to Hitlerism being established in this country.

One matter seems to us indisputable. Remembering how furious some of our political leaders got over the lurid stories of Communist plots in this country, when there was never more than alarmist reports on which to go, it is surprising how calmly the Mosley crusade is being taken. One wonders whether things would be taken quite so calmly if the Labour Party were known to have barbed wire placed at their fortress-like headquarters, had purchased armoured cars, had a fleet of aeroplanes in training, and had its own military organization with men sworn to obey even such a pantomimic figure as Sir Oswald Mosley? They would have been suppressed long ago, we fancy.

The Burnley Branch N.S.S. has a keen Secretary, in Mr. A. Lawson, 20 Kirkgate, Burnley, who asks all Freethinkers in Burnley who are not members of the local Branch to join up. It may be that all are not prepared to take a very active part, but the task of those who are doing the work is made more easy by the backing of a substantial membership.

Messrs. Whitehead, Clayton and Brighton have taken full advantage of the fine weather, and all report good meetings and useful work. The speakers are under arrangement with the Executive of the N.S.S., and any offers of help, especially of assistance at meetings, would be much appreciated. Details as to place and time of meetings can always be found in the Lecture Notice Column.

To-day (Sunday) the West Ham Branch N.S.S. will have an outing to Kew Gardens, and an invitation to join the party is extended to all Freethinkers and friends within access. Through train from Bow Road (District) Railway at 9.15 a.m. Day ticket 1s. return. Each member will carry lunch, and tea for the party will be arranged. Any further information can be obtained from Mr. F. G. Warner, 83a Dawlish Road, Leyton, London, E.10.

Eulogies of things established and of people in power are always open to suspicion. They may be pleasant, they may be true, but usually they are unnecessary. They throw often far more light on the character of the one who pays the compliment than on the one who receives them.

It is surprising that while most men are ashamed of being detected in an act of physical cowardice, so few should be ashamed of intellectual cowardice. Far from that being the case they will take it as a sufficient justification that it was not safe to express their opinions, or that it was not wise to oppose the majority. And yet physical cowardice is a small matter beside intellectual cowardice. In nine cases out of ten, when a man is guilty of physical cowardice the consequences end with himself and are negligible. In intellectual matters this is seldom the case. To suppress one's opinions may be to suppress something that is of infinite importance to the whole of humanity. To hide one's convictions is to convey the impression to others that you agree with their views, and you are thus bolstering a lie. And in society the personal attitude is reflected in the way we glorify the soldier and ignore the thinker.

Chapman Cohen, "Opinions."

Freethought and Social Science

II.

EVILS and consequences that followed in the wake of the "Industrial Revolution" have been the subject of a great controversy and literature which can only be referred to here for its general upshot. In the sequel a fresh incursion into industrial concerns was made by the State, not so much to direct or control their course, as to prevent action from being injurious to the public weal. So has been built-up a body of legislation aimed at preserving life and health for the worker, protection of children from oppression, extending its ministrations to the collective life of towns, mitigating air and water pollution from effluent of chimney and factory, and noxious accompaniments to mechanical processes acknowledged in the North country adage, "Where there's muck, there's brass." Illustrating, again, the ever-present issue of private versus public good. Otherwise practical economy has been left mainly to its own devices under the motive force of self-interest; modified on occasion by forms of trade and commercial combination.

A notable contribution to a scientific view of human affairs is the *Essay on Population* of Malthus, published in 1798, and later expanded in matter and form. Malthus grew up in a liberal atmosphere, for his father was an admirer of the French humanists, and as an economic student was led to question the optimistic forecasts of thinkers like Condorcet and Godwin, that all would go well with mankind if obstructive and oppressive institutions were removed. He was impressed by the persistent pressure of population on the availing means of subsistence, and, if these were improved without this factor being recognized, things would become as before, and poverty continue as the general lot. To adopt Virgil's lines:—

So are we doomed to speed from bad to worse,
Ever borne backwards drifting whence we came.

Others had called attention to the question, but he gave it systematic expression; and by his collection of data showed the difficulties under which mankind laboured up to his time in obtaining necessities of existence. If his contention is matter of debate to some, he brought into clear cognizance man's relation to biological circumstance. This service is paralleled in another direction by the work of the great sanitarian, Chadwick, a Utilitarian, who laid the basis for making the dull agglomerations of the factory town, and others of a different kind, more decent and wholesome for their dwellers. Influential in other phases of amelioration, he helped to found the art of preventive medicine, a beneficent accessory to a healthy corporate life.

The "Capitalist System" did not begin with the steam motor. A growth of large units of action in trade and commerce, of joint-stock concerns, was going forward under handicraft. With new methods, the cost of installing intricate machinery in a special building—the factory, and its accessories, heightened the part that capital outlay plays in modern enterprise; this has increased in importance with the scale and complexity of its operations—a giant steamship, an engineering feat like the Forth Bridge. Its development in this country was accompanied and affected by a great advance in scientific knowledge. It brought with it innumerable amenities of living. What it failed to accomplish, or its shortcomings viewed from different angles, was the subject of searching criticism from various quarters. As the nineteenth century drew to its close there was a movement of thought to unite rational concepts in the religious sphere with a resolute attempt to grapple with evils of poverty, and the like, still persisting in the social sphere, to imple-

ment completely the ideal of equal opportunity to all without impairing the vital incentive of self-help and self-reliance.

Modern effort in other countries, following English initiative, has proceeded along similar lines if supported in some cases by the State, or modified by different conditions. So in this way, during the last hundred years, the world's economic organization has been transformed; and through improved means of intercommunication by land and sea, regions heretofore sanded by remoteness have been brought into intimate association. All of which has been accomplished through the operation of the Capitalist system—that is, free formation of private capital or means, and its employment wherever there is promise of remunerative investment. Beyond incidental criticism, it has at the same time called forth a hostile school or doctrine which challenges all its works and ways—known under the general designation of Socialism. This attitude demands attention in the present connexion for its relation to live issues of social dynamics.¹

The leading Socialist tenet—that the State shall own and control the means and machinery of production, and its corollaries, is too familiar to require emphasis. The school is divided into various sects, reformist, evolutionary, revolutionary as mutually antagonistic as they are in the lump to what they dub the "present system." Though mainly of Continental origin, since its introduction here in the '80's it has won a measure of direct support, and influenced the programme of a new, if composite, political party. It assumes that in some malign way the means of production created by "Labour" have been collared by a set of sharpers, who, by appropriating all surplus value beyond a bare subsistence wage to the worker, rob him of his right and perpetuate poverty.

As applied to our own peculiar combination it misses the realities of the national sources of livelihood, and puts the cart before the horse.

In the reign of Anne some six millions lived in Great Britain, largely by agriculture, with measures being taken to foster manufacture, for colonial settlement abroad and "merchant adventurers" pushing out into the seven seas in pursuit of trade. By expansion of enterprise from the age of invention, there has been created at length a world-market; created by people venturing their private fortune, sometimes their lives, occasionally losing both, in opening up avenues for commerce, settlement, industry, finance. The supply and conduct of this manifold business has enabled 45 millions of souls, totally unrelated to the resources of the country itself, to find a living by one mode or another—or did until yesterday. And the social question for us, for a people who exist through a "rake-off" from world resources, is simply, in the first instance, a fair division of the spoil between entrepreneur and worker in a similar spirit that determines honour among thieves.²

The next thing is how to retain, or conserve what remains of the position. For before us is the situation that other capable people are in the swim for the same reward. And certain Eastern competitors can undertake the contract at a price 50 per cent or more below our own living standard quotation. Beyond

¹Discussion of the origin and interpretation of the twin terms, Socialism and Communism, would fill a treatise. An early expression of Communist doctrine in England is by one, Winstanley, about 1652.

²During the last half-century "Labour's share" has advanced. More recently Social Services borne by taxation of wealth represent a further increment. The average wage level at last December is estimated (officially) as between 80 and 90 per cent above 1914, allowing for reduced working hours, as against cost of living, about 40 per cent above pre-war rate.

geographical situation, every advantage with which "the foremost commercial nation, and workshop of the world" began its career has gone by the board. The world's "abundance," sometimes mentioned in this regard, in so far as it reaches here does so in return for services rendered or as payment in kind. It is the property or surplus of those who produce it, and if these services fail it is hardly likely to come as a gift, including as it does two-thirds of our food and a large part of our raw material. Some articles from abroad have been stimulated in their native supply by capital outlay at home; tea, rubber, cotton, cocoa, sugar, vegetable oils. As things are, the loss of half our foreign trade, compared with pre-war figures, is responsible for the unemployment existing in our midst, as it is most felt in those lines serving the foreign market, including shipping.

The absolute tone of current Socialist prescription implies there is no other alternative to the Welfare Seeker. It is a purely gratuitous panacea, on all fours with other theories it opposes. The only experiment made in this *métier* on a national scale is that of the U.S.S.R. So far as its results can be known, while it has supporters here (apart from its suborned revolutionary propaganda), in others it only incites revulsion, alike to doctrine and method. When Socialism was introduced in England by certain advocates a few decades back, its first proposals (and they varied in purpose) roused keen criticism and controversy, not least from the quarter and movement mentioned above. Its wiser prophets recognized that Socialist modes could only be adopted tentatively in our singular body politic, and they have had considerable influence. . . . To-day, a fresh batch of protagonists are in the offing with proposals as of a newly-born evangel, once their Labour adherents shove them into power, ready to "bring in Socialism" overnight by Ministerial decree; banks, insurance, transport, land, what not, taken in one stride, with themselves, it is whispered, installed in directive "key-positions."

It remains to meet the challenge of all-round well-being from another approach—ever a ceaseless quest.

"Does the road wind up-hill all the way?
Yes, to the very end.
Will the day's journey take the whole long day?
From morn to night, my friend."

AUSTEN VERNEY.

(To be concluded.)

Get to the Roots!

(Concluded from page 349.)

It is a good policy to magnify the significance of the life to come—to emphasize the question where it is to be spent—to point to mansions in the skies after this brief existence (with its hovels, its drain-digging and sewer-cleaning) as the glorious compensation to be secured by simple belief in the Gospel story. To rule the mob and keep it under, it still is fed with tales of wonder. The glories of the better land are "unspeakable," of course; and they who have suffered so much from privation, disease and sorrow in the life that now is, shall eternally rest in the midst of plenty near the throne of God! Ay, but it is another story for those who will not believe the Gospel story. Grrr! "Fear him who is able to cast both body and soul into Hell! Yea, I say unto you—Fear him!"

Now this fear of God inevitably carries with it the honouring of the King, who, anointed by God's official earthly representative, reigns as a sub-God. One philosopher speaks of the fear of God as the beginning of wisdom. While, of course, no Freethinker

is to be got to swallow that, there can be no doubt if you get the fear of God well burned into the consciousness of the uncultivated, you will find it much more effective than the fear of death. Though you might not think so from the Christian attitude to it, Death is really a detail. What really matters is that which awaits you beyond the "River." The final judgment seat has to be faced, and you are either to be everlastingly happy or "for it"—namely the pit of everlasting woe where dwell the Devil and his angels—where the worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched. The wealth of imagery drawn upon by writers in the pay of the Churches is really remarkable! It is certainly Macabresque! Put shortly, if you don't come to heel in the present life, you may take it you will go to hell in the next. Have you read your Dante and Milton with faithful attention? Well, see what happened to the rebels in Paradise! Of course, if *one* rebellion took place in Heaven, it is quite on the cards that there may yet be another. The Celestial Big Man may again be faced with defiance—his august throne may again be threatened. Is there some such foreboding at the core of the thoughts of several of his mundane representatives? Are they shaken by the fear that they are beginning to see signs of the Rock of Ages becoming rocky? They affect optimistically to see all things working together for good. In the ordinary intercourse of life we are familiar with the grinning and jocular padre; but when we look at the unrest all over the earth; at dictators and despots holding sway; and at the wretched conditions of helpless millions, we are disposed to enquire why all the spirituality, holiness, and power of faith unto salvation have not prevented these fruits of manifest injustice and tyranny? And the answer is—because ecclesiastics have been the henchmen of tyrants in all ages—because ecclesiastics have ever been the bitterest opponents of social and political reforms.

The problem for the Church is: How is indifference to be overcome; how are the lapsed and backsliding believers to be brought back? The higher critics have tried to make Jehovah a reformed character—have clothed him with the attributes of mildness and amiability—and, in so doing, have aroused protests from their sterner brethren who want a God with force of character—not a mere benevolent mumbler without any fixed convictions. The sterner brethren perhaps have much history on their side. And, in any event, a revised Jehovah has evidently done nothing to refill the pews. The fundamentalists, such as the R.C.'s and the Salvation Army, are in no doubt as to the kind of God the world needs, and that is the good old first edition—real, definite, cursing, blasting, devastating. How otherwise can the greatness of Calvary be brought home to human beings? There is no more curious mystery conceivable than the scheme of redemption through Jesus Christ; and there can be none more unjust or revolting in conception. For observe what it involves. Though the Devil is supposed to be the enemy and rival of God, he must become the agent of God in punishing the human beings who refuse to fall in with the scheme. In Christ's alleged vicarious sacrifice, the victim is burdened with the wrath of God and all the sins of mankind. That is the real old-fashioned God of the Christians! He is only to be placated by blood. He kills his only son for the purpose of saving mankind. Then he sends millions of mankind to Hell because they reject his salvation. Was there ever a greater *reductio ad absurdum*? And what of the inhabitants of planets other than our own? Has Calvary been repeated in each one of them? All Christian thought is manifestly limited and sectional. The Christian God at any rate

possesses no such attribute as omnipotence. He continues to exist in the belief of Christians so long as he is fortified by *money*, which is far more powerful than he. The moment that support is withdrawn he disappears; and the whole clamjamfray of Pope, Cardinals, Bishops, Canons, Deans, Priests, Parsons and Pastors are thrown on their beam-ends! But there is one thing that persists in life without material bribes, and that is Freethought. Freethinking rebels are not for sale. They are not to be seduced by any school of spookists or professed soul-savers. Let the wealthiest adherents of Christianity keep and use their cash to meet the heavy fire insurance premiums that their Church demands.

Contrasting the twentieth with the nineteenth century, who can doubt that the religious ring of sincerity is no longer heard. The Church has too many irons in the fire. It is getting mixed up with political stunts of various kinds—Sunday shops and excursions, liquor trade, betting. The *Wayside Pulpit* reeks with politics. The Churches are allowing themselves to be dragged into and mixed up with fanatical crusades against the social habits of the mass of the people. Their "high calling and election" have respectively degenerated into hysterical bawling, and the exhibition of bigotry on party platforms. Their calling is no longer "high," unless in the sense of "smelly." Religion is concerned with the most squalid discussions. No wonder thinking people are in rebellion. These "new" methods merely pander to the cupidity of the many-headed. Good manners are sacrificed to them. Reserve and decent reticence are unknown. But modern Catholics will run five miles to gaze with gaping wonder at a grotto to which miraculous properties are ascribed.

Protestants are not in much better case. Though they believe in fewer miracles than Catholics, they believe enough to identify themselves with a decadent and dying superstition. Admittedly it is an unconscionable time in dying, for if the Holy Coat of Treves were to-day listed for sale at Christie's or Sotheby's, it would no doubt fetch an enormous price. And it is notable how interest is stirred over some child who dreams about a saint. Whenever the dream is reported, the Vatican is on the job at once. For the saint may have told the child of the whereabouts of some pool which can cure corns, cancer, consumption, rheumatism, neuralgia and gastritis. *O tempora O mores!* Oh, the touching filial devotion of the sons and daughters of Rome!

At Even ere the Sun was set
The sick Oh Lord around Thee lay!

Unhappily, the miraculous spas are not universal cure-alls. Only a (very) limited number of persons can apparently derive benefit from the consecrated waters. Oh ye of little faith!

Religion as an influential thing in personal and social life may be in a bad way. But clericalism buttressed by bullion is not. Churches which depend mostly on voluntary contributions are feeling the draught, of course, but they keep on singing "The Lord will Provide." And then the situation is sometimes saved by incorporating unions. There has been a speeding up in unions of late, bringing the time nearer when the Reunion of Christendom may come within sight. Then finally whatever of Protestantism has not been absorbed by Freethought will be inside the Roman Tiger; and the final conflict between Rome and Reason will be waged.

IGNOTUS.

THE WAY TO CONVICTION

I must keep on preaching, said the man of great faith, for whenever I stop preaching, I begin to think.

An Embarrassing Situation

THE pastor of Tremont Temple Baptist Church, Boston, having stated in an Easter radio sermon that Jesus died of a broken heart as evidenced by the blood and water issuing from his wounded side, I wrote him asking where I could find a medical description of this lesson, as I had not met it in thirty-five years of general practice. I had heard this theory stated before on "Medical Authority," together with the admission, by a noted fundamentalist preacher, that there was nothing in Roman crucifixion to cause death in the few hours that Jesus was known to be upon the cross, the victim often hanging for many days and, according to *Encyclopedia Britannica*, was not infrequently revived after being taken down for dead.

Not receiving an immediate reply to my query, I sent letters to a number of leading men in the medical profession asking if, in their opinion, the statement could be justified by physical facts. The replies were prompt, and all in the negative.

The Professor of Theory and Practice in the Harvard Medical School wrote:—

I am not familiar with any medical authority justifying the theory of a broken heart at the time of the crucifixion. Of course rupture, following cardiac infraction is not uncommon. . . . Even in that event there would be no escape of water from the side.

The Professor of Physiology confirms the above opinion, and brands the theory as "utterly absurd."

The Chief Medical Examiner of Suffolk County, a man of international fame, writes: "I know of no instance of rupture of myocardium under any circumstances other than those of a pathological condition of the muscle or a very intensive and unusual form of physical strain."

After several weeks of waiting I wrote again to the pastor of Tremont Temple, offering to send him typed copies of the above letters. The response I finally received did not indicate that he cared for this favour.

He writes: "My statement to the effect that Jesus Christ died of a broken heart was made on the authority of a Christian physician, whom I heard speak on 'The Crucifixion' a number of years ago in the West. He was a deacon in the Temple Baptist Church in Los Angeles. He has died since I left there, but I had a part in conducting his funeral services two years ago, when I was in Southern California on my summer vacation."

So that's that! No further identification seems necessary. He was a Christian—a deacon—and has gone home to be with Jesus. But to clinch the evidence, so to speak, the name is given of one "Dr. Frank M. Goodchild of New York City, one of the foremost Baptist preachers in America," who said, "The blood and water that came out of the stab of the spear indicated that Christ died of a ruptured heart." Unfortunately, I was unable to find this gentleman's name in *Who's Who*, or in the New York directories, and my letter was returned marked "unknown," so I presume he too has "passed on."

The final paragraph concludes: "However, my remark to which you refer was not considered by me as the essential fact in the crucifixion of Jesus. The central thought with me was that He actually died, and that there is no reason to accept the exploded 'swoon' theory relative to the death of Christ."

I have written for information as to the "exploded swoon theory." My self-addressed and stamped envelope has not been returned. Perhaps the distinguished clergyman is having difficulties trying to find any adequate cause of death. Would it not be embarrassing to have to admit that Jesus died a natural death from a diseased condition of the heart, contracted some days or weeks prior to the big event for which he came into this world?

WILLIAM W. HARVEY, M.D.

Boston, Mass.

THE EGO

Praising others is often the most acceptable manner of admiring ourselves.

On What Tree Did Judas Die?

THERE is no historical evidence that Judas Iscariot hanged himself on a tree at all, and what is claimed for the episode would fail to pass muster in a court of law; nevertheless it is of a kind upon which many a credo has been based, and many a festival founded.

In tradition, the elder-tree seems to be first favourite. It held its own in England for three hundred years, being introduced early in the fourteenth century by Sir John Maundeville, who quaintly writes:—

Under Mount Sion, towards the Valley of Jehoshaphat, is a well called Natatorium Silox (the Pool of Siloah), where our Lord was washed after his baptism; and there our Lord made the blind man to see; And fast by is still the elder tree on which Judas hanged himself for despair.

Langland, that author, who went of a May morning to see wonders on the Malvern Hills, followed after with:—

"Judas he japed with juven silver,
And sithen on an eller hanged hym after."

Shakespeare, in *Love's Labour's Lost*, makes a pun on it:—

"What mean you, Sir?
To make Judas hang himself.
Begin, Sir, you are my elder;
Well followed; Judas was hanged on an elder."

But Gerarde will have none of it. Throughout Italy, the Riviera, Corsica, and the Mediterranean Islands one may see, during the months of April and May, a most beautiful landscape ornament, a tree without leaves, but covered with red and purple blossoms. It is the wild carob tree, rises to a height of nearly thirty feet, and bears pods with seeds. Says Gerarde: "It may be called in English Judas tree, for that it is thought to be that whereon Judas did hang himself, and not upon the elder tree, as it is vulgarly said."

The last sentence seems rather hard on the previous writers. A third candidate for this doubtful honour is the fig tree. It is stated definitely that Judas hanged himself on the very fig tree which Jesus cursed. The leaves had fallen, the tree was dying. Henceforth it bore no fruit. But in Sicily, famous for its folklore, they claim the tamarisk. There it is known as "Vruca, and we are told":—

L'âme de Judas tourne toujours autour du tamarix et se tourmente en voyant que son corps y demeure à jamais suspendu.

But this does not exhaust the list, for tradition links with the name of Judas the Aspen. In the Ukraine it is still maintained that the leaves of this tree have never ceased to tremble since the day when Judas hanged himself thereon. It is to this that allusion is made in the Russian proverb: "There is an accursed tree which trembles without even a breath of wind." A tree common to Palestine and the Greek islands is the terebinth, from which the famous Chian turpentine is produced, and although only a small tree to-day it is traditionally associated with evil deeds, and because of this has been reduced in size.

In conclusion, mention must be made of the dog-rose, which in former times was regarded with ill-favour in Germany, where the beautiful hips were known as Judas-beeren, and that it was cursed because of Judas, is made clear from the fact that its prickles now point earthwards. Of such stuff is the folk-lore of the unenlightened, and out of it spring all the creeds and beliefs of the credulous!

ARTHUR HASLAM.

THE CONVOY SYSTEM.

Help the backward pupil by all means; but remember that the quick-witted are not to be fettered to the fools. It is a poor education that works on the convoy principle, where the speed of the fastest ship is measured by the rate of the slowest.

Correspondence

REACTION IN FREETHOUGHT

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

SIR,—Although Mr. Stafford's article is in the main a criticism of your own views, yet as he includes "a large percentage of Freethinkers" in his condemnation, perhaps you will allow me to discuss some of his remarks.

First, let us read his opening words: "... Freethought, if it is to render the fullest possible service to mankind, should include the application of criticism in as free and unrestrained a manner to social and economic questions as to Biblical and religious questions." We can agree, but let us read some of his last paragraph. "... some limitation of freedom of speech will take place during the period of building the new society ... but this will be not in respect of criticism of the details of reconstructing society. *It will apply only to those who by speech and writing seek to persuade others to prevent the building of a Socialist society.*" (Italics mine). That hardly squares with the earlier remarks. And, as I read the second quotation, I can smell incense.

Then Mr. Stafford says: "The Freethinker should be prepared to accept the findings of scientific investigation into ... social conditions, even if the outcome is the doctrine that only by revolutionary activity ... will a new and better (society) be established." I will assume that Mr. Stafford is not suggesting an uncritical acceptance, but I suggest that the sentence would read just as truthfully written thus—"The Freethinker should be prepared to accept the findings of scientific investigation into social conditions, even if the outcome be the rejection of the doctrine of revolutionary activity as a means to better social conditions."

Mr. Stafford seems to reserve his blame merely for those Freethinkers who have dismissed Communism without enquiry, but surely we should extend that blame to those who have *accepted* Communism without enquiry. As a Freethinker he should be opposed to the uncritical attitude altogether.

Finally I am amazed when he says that (some Freethinkers) "avoid facing the fact that Freethought has not brought about a fundamental change in the structure of society." It would be a new experience to me to find Freethinkers claiming that it would. Is it not our contention that Freethought is a method of approach, not a scheme of settlement of the problems to be tackled? I am left wondering whether Mr. Stafford is a Freethinker, submitting a reasoned case for Communism, or merely a Communist giving lip-service to Freethought principles for just so long as the (to him) hated capitalist regime is in being, but ready to suppress free expression as soon as his ideas are in power.

Not only can I smell incense, but burning flesh as well.

S. R. A. READY.

SIR,—The key to Mr. Stafford's position is to be found in his concluding paragraph. Thence we learn that those "who by speech and writing seek to persuade others to prevent the upbuilding of a Socialist society," will have their freedom in this direction curtailed. Shades of Christianity! If you agree with Mr. Stafford, excellent! If you do not then beware! It is bad philosophy. It is certainly not Freethought. As a Socialist I say quite definitely that it, or Communism, is not the puny theory Mr. Stafford would have us believe.

May I remind Mr. Stafford that a prison system is still a prison system, irrespective of whether it is harsh or reformative. A dictatorship no matter what its aim is inherently repressive. Communist dictatorship may appeal to Mr. Stafford, but his arguments could be turned to extol Fascism. Fascism is just as much concerned with building a better society, and is therefore justified from Mr. Stafford's analysis in suppressing freedom as a "historic necessity, and to oppose it with theoretic talk ... is to reject determinism in history" (from the Fascist point of view).

I am afraid I have already exceeded my space, I should like to conclude by suggesting that if Mr. Stafford surveyed sociology as a Freethinker, that is without a pre-

conceived prejudice for Communism and a resolve to make the facts harmonize with that prejudice, he might be less dogmatic in his attitude, he would be on the road to Freethought.

RALPH KEARNEY.

SIR.—Freethought that is true to itself is reactionary. Freethought that will agree to the suppression of a particular opinion is progressive. Such is my reading of Mr. Egerton Stafford's position, the particular opinion he is in favour of suppressing being any that proves an obstacle to Socialism.

If we say that Mr. Stafford's position is not one of Freethought at all, he says we are clinging to principle and refusing to face facts. It is all very well to attack capitalist and religious dictatorships, but Freethinkers should leave the Communist one alone. It is different from all others, since its head is subject to the criticism of the proletariat.

As if Hitler, too, were not subject to the criticism of his own supporters!

It is Mr. Stafford who will not face facts. Can he quote a single fact to show that progress there would have been slower, if the path chosen had travelled to economic emancipation by way of mental freedom? Until it has been tried and found as illusory as the rest, man can still look forward to the Age of Freethought to prove an era of greater happiness and well-being than any in his history.

P. VICTOR MORRIS.

[We have received many more letters, all following the general lines of criticism of the above, which we are unable to insert, owing to want of space. We must, for the thousandth time, impress upon correspondents that a letter must be a letter, not an essay. No one expects a letter to deal in detail with every point in dispute. It is enough to take the central idea, or one or two points, and deal with them.—EDITOR.]

ALL IN THE BOOK

SIR,—May I give two or three instances of a tendency that is at present very common among Christians with humanitarian sympathies, the determination to find the origin of the principles for which they are working in what they call their "scriptures"?

Nothing is more certain than that the whole problem of Humanitarianism, in its various branches, such as pacifism, the plea for penal reform, or the gentler treatment of animals, is a product of modern times, and was not even present to the minds of the patriarchs who are now credited with it. They neither favoured these doctrines, nor opposed them; they lived in an age when such questions had not arisen.

Yet in the *Morning Post* of May 30, I read a letter on "Church and Sword," in which a clergyman pointed out with entire cogency that pacifists can find no justification for their principles in the New Testament; I have before me an absurd leaflet headed, *The Death Penalty is Incompatible with Christianity*; and most amazing of all, a large number of diet reformers are convinced, in spite of what one would think were conclusive texts to the contrary, that Christ was a vegetarian. In regard to the broiled fish and the honeycomb, of which "he did eat," I have more than once seen it seriously argued that he may have eaten the honeycomb and rejected the fish! In brief, everyone is determined to see in the Bible the faith which he himself holds, whether there is actually a trace of it or not.

I shall not be suspected of antagonism to beliefs which I have myself held for half-a-century; but this dishonest attempt to produce Biblical sanction for them is nauseating.

HENRY S. SALT.

Obituary.

SIDNEY BURR SAVILL

WE regret to announce the death of Sidney Burr Savill, aged 58, which followed a sudden breakdown on June 2. The immediate cause of death was cerebral hemorrhage. An active member of the N.S.S. for over thirty years, and attached to the South London Branch, his activity took many forms, always generous and practical; one of the most useful being the gift to the N.S.S. of three open-air

sites in South London upon which the Society displays advertisements of the *Freethinker*. In character he possessed a fine blending of desirable features. A quiet unassuming and dignified presence, and behind it an independence of thought and outlook, an adherence to principles which he believed to be true, and a readiness to face and fight any challenge of his rights. By his death Freethought loses a loyal and worthy soldier, and one whose work and support will be missed on many occasions. The remains were cremated on Thursday, June 7, at West Norwood Crematorium, and later in the day the ashes were interred in the Crystal Palace Cemetery. Many relatives and friends were present at both scenes and at each a Secular Service was read by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON.

INDOOR.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C. 1) : 11.0, C. Delisle Burns, M.A., D.Lit.—"Religion and Public Affairs."

OUTDOOR.

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCHES N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.0, Mr. B. A. Le Maine.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) : 11.30, Sunday, June 17, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, A Lecture. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, June 18, Mr. L. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 8.0, Thursday, June 21, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Brockwell Park) : 7.30, Sunday, June 17, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, June 19, Mr. G. F. Green. Stonhouse Street, High Street, Clapham, 8.0, Wednesday, June 20, Mrs. E. Grout. Alivall Road, Clapham Junction, 8.0, Friday, June 22, Mr. G. F. Green.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 12.0, Sunday, A Lecture. 3.30, Platform N. 1, Messrs. Collins and Wood. Platform No. 2, Mr. Hyatt. 6.30, Messrs. Hyatt, Bryant and others. Wednesday, 7.0, Messrs. Collins and W. P. Campbell Everden. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Wood and Saphin.

COUNTRY.

OUTDOOR.

ACCRINGTON MARKET : 7.30, Sunday, June 17, Mr. J. Clayton.

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. A grand combined Rail and Coach Tour through the High Peak of Derbyshire will take place on Sunday, June 17. Train leaves New Street, L.M.S. 10.0 a.m. Fare 9s. Further particulars, F. Terry, 9 Middle Park Road, Selly Oak.

BLACKBURN MARKET : 7.30, Thursday, June 21, Mr. J. Clayton.

BLYTH (Market Place) : 7.0, Monday, June 18, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Bank Street Parking Ground) : 7.0, Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture each evening.

BURNLEY MARKET : 7.30, Tuesday, June 19, Mr. J. Clayton.

CROOK (Market Place) : 7.0, Wednesday, June 20, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (Dunne Square, Paisley) : 8.0, Saturday, June 16, Mrs. Whitefield—Ascending from the Primitive." West Regent Street, 7.30, Sunday, June 17, Mrs. Whitefield—"Governmental Sterilization and its Effects."

HANTS AND DORSET BRANCH N.S.S. (491 Wimborne Road, Winton, Bournemouth) : 8.0, A meeting will be held every Tuesday night. Freethinkers on holiday cordially invited.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths) : 8.0, Sunday, June 17, Messrs. C. McKelvie and D. Robinson. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, June 21, Messrs. A. Jackson and J. V. Shortt.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Park Gates, Moss Side) : 6.30, Mr. George Hall (Manchester)—A Lecture.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street) : 7.0, Saturday, June 16, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SOUTH SHIELDS (Would Have Memorial) : 7.0, Wednesday, June 20, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Failure of Christianity."

STOCKTON-ON-TEES (Market) : 7.0, Sunday, June 17, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND (Gill Bridge Avenue) 7.0, A Lecture.

TRAWDEN : 7.45, Friday, June 15, Mr. J. Clayton.

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