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• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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*Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums,
Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions

A Question of Honour

INTEREST and amusement, in this country, was excited a little while ago when it was made public that M. Borotra, the famous tennis player had been challenged to a duel by another Frenchman. Exception had been taken by the latter to some remarks made by M. Borotra. When interviewed M. Borotra said he would certainly accept the challenge, because, he explained, "there is a code of honour. You see I am a Frenchman, and I must obey the code of my country. I could not face my fellow countrymen if I refused to accept the challenge. You pleasant, good-natured Englishmen laugh at these things, and you are right to do so." Our right being thus granted, I take it that M. Borotra will not be offended at anyone smiling at the spectacle of two men who have reached an age of legal responsibility resorting to so absurd a method of settling a difference. Later a reconciliation was effected between the two gentlemen, although if they had met it is fairly certain that neither of them would have been very seriously injured. The sword of one might have pricked an arm of the other; a little, a very little blood might have been shed and each would have gone home to breakfast with his "honour" satisfied. The one certain thing is that neither of the two would have had his opinion of the other altered because one of them had managed to stick the point of a sword into his opponent. How could it have been otherwise? If it were a case of Carnera versus myself, and if the issue were to be settled with fists, I have every confidence that in every opinion in which Carnera differed from myself he would prove himself to be in the right. And if the issue were put to me in that form, I should

most probably agree with him as I should agree with a fractious child or a lunatic.

* * *

Courage or Cowardice?

M. Borotra was impelled to accept the challenge to a duel—which he evidently considered stupid—by the existence of a "code of honour," and probably felt that he displayed courage by his conduct. "Honour" is a very curious word; it is rather elusive in its meaning, and it has some strange associations. For instance, a man who slandered a personal friend, and then entered into an agreement with a third party to do him injury, would be counted as one without honour. In politics, national and international, it is otherwise. A man may plot to ruin a political opponent, or he may arrange a treaty of peace with a country, and at the same time enter into another arrangement with a second country to the injury of the first, and his "honour" will remain unaffected. In another walk of life, a man will not find his "honour" affected because he burgles, or because he steals pence from a child; but let him act as a "copper's nark" and his "honour" with his associates is gone for ever. The daughter of an ordinary man who becomes an unmarried mother has lost her "honour," but if the man in the case happens to be a prince, or a king, or even an aristocrat, the incident is accepted with equanimity, and may even become a source of family pride. Beyond having some sort of a code of honour, every nation, every group, and every individual has a code of honour, and any one of these codes may as easily persuade a man to play the fool or the rogue as otherwise.

As to courage. I think M. Borotra believes that accepting a challenge to a duel is an indication of courage, and refusal a proof of cowardice. I beg to differ; at any rate it depends upon circumstances. Suppose, for example, that Mr. George Lansbury challenged Lord Hugh Cecil to a duel because the latter had suggested that the political opinions of the former were those of a brigand or an idiot. Lord Hugh Cecil would have required courage to make himself a laughing-stock by accepting the challenge. In France one requires courage to refuse a challenge because there he has to face the prevalence of a stupid and primitive test of right. The absurdity of the duel remains the same in either case, but the moral courage—as distinguished from the courage displayed by the lower animals—required to accept in the one case and refuse in the other is greater. Not for a moment would M. Borotra have been displaying courage in entering on a duel—in France. In France, as in Germany, and in other countries where the duel obtains, a man is supposed to accept the challenge of any fool or bully who considers himself aggrieved. In England or America one would send for a policeman and have the man locked up as a nuisance. In

France fighting a duel is, with certainty, one of two things. Either an act of foolishness if one believes it has any bearing on the point at issue; or an act of cowardice on the part of one who lacks the courage to refuse to take part in such an absurd procedure.

* * *

The Persistence of the Primitive

The Jubilee hysteria, with its foolish and insulting talk about the stability of the Empire depending upon the person of the King, represented a *resurgence* of the primitive, the duel represents its *persistence*. I do not suppose that at any time mankind was ever foolish enough to believe that there was any possible logical connexion between A. proving that he was more expert than B. with a club, or a sword, or a pistol, and showing that B. was wrong concerning the cause of rain or the value of a political theory. Mankind has been very foolish, but never quite foolish enough to believe that. Behind the belief in the duel lies the primitive assumption that it involved an appeal to the tribal joss to decide which party was in the right by giving him victory. Whether the duel was individual or tribal this factor was there. It was there in the trial by ordeal generally. Testing a woman's chastity by drinking bitter waters, as described in the Bible, is one example, the religious oath to witnesses, common to uncivilized peoples all over the world, the function of the king's champion at a coronation, these with thousands of other instances that might be cited are illustrations of the belief underlying the duel in all its forms. It was the belief that the directing agency of the gods would cause the just man to triumph that gave the duel its vogue.

With the development of society the religious significance of the duel becomes "rationalized." What was a question of the interference of the gods, is interpreted as a question of "honour." An ethical reason is found for a purely religious practice. It is also interesting to notice, that, as is common with examples of primitive customs, their most persistent practice is to be found in the ranks of royalty, and with the aristocracy of a country. Coats of arms, with their totemistic implications, the primitive nature of the pomp of court ceremonials, the superiority that is claimed for the fighting forces of a country over the industrial community, and so forth. The duel points the same way. No one ever expects the "common" people to fight duels. If attempted among them it becomes, on a large scale, a vendetta, and on a small one, a breach of the peace or just plain murder.

* * *

National Duels

Extending from the individual the duel assumes its most disastrous form in the appeal to war between nations. The absurdity of a man proving he is right by demonstrating his superiority in the use of a sword or a pistol, is very obvious. But nations still go to war, and individuals belonging to one group will murder the individuals belonging to another group, as a method of vindicating national "honour." Yet the ordeal of battle between nations, the cry to God to protect the right in battle is not a whit more intellectually or ethically respectable than the demand of the duelist—careful to manoeuvre for the use of the weapon in which he is most expert—to vindicate his honour on the duelling field. The duel between individuals it is generally agreed settles nothing, does nothing, save to develop the qualities of a bully. But a duel between nations is endowed with every heroic and uplifting quality of which human nature is capable.

It is also worth noting that the rationalized excuse for war as concerned with national honour, places

"honour" upon a lower level than when it is concerned with individuals only. And this is the case whether the individuals belong to the home nation or to a foreign one. Where individual members of, say, the present Government are concerned—although any Government at any time will serve equally well—one could trust them to be normally honest and truthful in the conduct towards others, as between individuals. But where national "honour" is concerned, these same men will lie with their hands on their hearts and with professions, which they know to be false, on their lips. Neither the Chancellor of the Exchequer nor the Prime Minister can be thought of as robbing an individual for his own benefit. But they can, in the name of the nation, demand from a defeated enemy, large sums of money for damage done by the enemy to members of their own country, and then in virtue of a purely legal quibble decline to pay over the money which they had received as trustees, and with the avowed intention of paying it to those on whose behalf it had been claimed and paid.*

M. Borotra's rule that "I must obey the code of my country" is not good enough. Most frequently "the code of my country" lags behind the code of the intelligent and developed individual, just as the God of a country is generally inferior to the best individuals. It is not courage, certainly not enlightened courage, that leads a man to accept a challenge to a duel. More often it is a mixture of moral cowardice and small intelligence. M. Borotra would have done his country a better service had he laughed at M. Poulain, or suggested that the duel should be fought with bladders or rotten eggs. But that would have meant laughing at that part of his country's code which had been inherited from an uncivilized ancestry, and that is what is never done in "respectable" society. Most men and women have greater courage in fighting the living than they have in fighting the dead. But it is the dead that rule us from their graves, and impose upon us conformity with most of the silly customs and stupid superstitions that cumber our lives.

MM. Poulain and Borotra were not afraid of each other, and would have faced the pistol muzzle without a quiver. What they were afraid of was the generations of ghosts that stood behind them. We are hag-ridden from our infancy and only a very few ever achieve even a reasonable amount of freedom from these weird phantoms of a forgotten past.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

*In the case of the money claimed by the British Government from the Germans for damage done to civilians by enemy air-raids. After the money was paid, it was deliberately withheld on the ground that the damage was not done to individuals but to the crown. It is not surprising that legal journals denounced the trick as worthy of a dishonest company promoter.

ACQUITTAL, PROHIBITED

A man against whom there was no evidence to justify conviction (by the Inquisition) and who yet would not confess himself guilty, was kept in prison indefinitely at the discretion of the inquisitor; at length, if the proof against him was only incidental and not direct, and the suspicion was light, he might be mercifully discharged under bail, with orders to stand at the door of the Inquisition from breakfast-time until dinner, and from dinner until supper, until some further testimony should turn up against him, and the inquisitor should be able to prove the guilt so confidently assumed. On this side of the Alps it was a recognized rule that no one should be acquitted.—H. C. Lea.

A Peripatetic Player

"What the bandar-log think now the jungle will think later."—*Rudyard Kipling*.

"Cure the drunkard, heal the insane, modify the homicide, civilize the savage, but what lesson can be devised for the debauchee of sentiment?"—*Emerson*.

PRIESTS of all denominations like to have a finger in every pie. When a great, or even a notable, man dies, they claim him as a member of their flock. So expert have they become at this sorry game that they have made body-snatching one of the fine arts. Romish priests administered the last sacraments to Richard Burton and Jerome Napoleon, both of whom were fierce anti-Clericals in life. Church of England parsons mumbled their mythological nonsense over the graves of Charles Darwin and doubting Thomas Huxley. The poet, Swinburne, was made to suffer a like indignity, and Robert Buchanan lies in "consecrated" ground within sight of the sea he so loved. Christian places of worship boast memorials to Shelley, who wrote the blasphemous *Queen Mab*; and also to Matthew Arnold, who compared the Holy Trinity to "three Lord Shaftesburys." The death of Sir Herbert Tree was made the subject of exploitation, for he was one of the foremost actors of his generation, and a man of much culture. Although Tree was quite outside the pale of the Christian Church, a memorial service was held in London, at which the Bishop of Birmingham preached. In the course of his sermon the Bishop said that he would not enter into the question of Sir Herbert's opinions on religion. In this matter he showed some astuteness, for a frank and full explanation of the great actor's views on theological matters would have not only startled the congregation, but have made some members "think furiously." Fortunately, Tree had "related himself to paper," and any person may consult his book, *Thoughts and After Thoughts* (Cassell), and read a most fascinating revelation of one of the most charming personalities of the dramatic life of our time.

It is not surprising that Herbert Tree wrote well, for he was half-brother to Max Beerholm, one of the cleverest and wittiest of artists. That two such geniuses as Herbert and Max should have emerged from one family is a sufficient proof of its quality. Tree's style was very personal, and in almost every line the man himself is revealed. One expression of it is of special importance at present, when the civilized world is trembling on the brink of widespread war, and civilization itself is threatened with terrible disaster. After speaking of "the wonderful strides" which knowledge had made in the previous half century, Tree goes on:—

It is not possible that the peoples of the earth will arise in the might of a new-born religion, and will knock at the gate of the world's conscience, singing in unison the hymn of humanity, and crying, "Thou shalt do no murder—even for the divine right of Kings; when frontiers shall be swept away, and there shall be one brotherhood of man, one flag, one language, and one religion—the religion of Humanity; when the people shall be generalised by the dreamers, the poets, the philosophers, the seers and singers, the artists of the world?"

This is brave writing for a man whose own walk in life was so largely concerned in interpreting other men's thoughts. Tree ventured to look forward to the Religion of Humanity, just as Emerson and Comte had before him. Listen for a moment to the great American philosopher:—

There will be a new Church founded on moral science, the Church of men to come. It will have heaven and earth for its beams and rafters; science

for symbol, and illustration. It will fast enough gather beauty, music, pictures, poetry.

There are many things in Tree's volume which are of evergreen interest. Here is a good story of Alfred Tennyson, who was visiting a country-house, where many local bigwigs had been invited to meet the great Poet Laureate:—

He was asked by his host after dinner, whether he would like to look at the stars. The great poet took up the telescope, and forgetting himself and others, gazed for twenty minutes at the wonders of the heavens. "Well, what do you think, Mr. Tennyson?" inquired his host. "I don't think much of our county families," replied Tennyson.

There is also a good story of Swinburne:—

He and William Morris were friends in early manhood. "At that time," said he, "William Morris was a blue-blood Tory, while I was a red Republican." "Now," he sighed, "Morris spouts at Socialists in Trafalgar Square, and I write for the evening papers."

Tree could coin a good epigram. Here are a few:—

Philosophy is a filly got by common sense out of misfortune.

Gentility is our watchword; we chorus the hymn of respectability.

A gentleman is one who does not care a button whether he is one or not.

The very foreword to the book gives some indication of its unusual quality:—

To mine enemy I dedicate the faults of this book, to my friend I dedicate what virtue it may have, hoping thus to give pleasure to both.

The book is one well worth perusal, for it has an important quality which was emphasized by a famous actor who was also a more famous author:—

"To thine own self be true."

It used to be said that the only books of reminiscences worth reading were those of players, because, in the days of auld lang syne, they were never expected for a moment to be respectable. Nowadays, players are far more respectable than even prelates, and, what is more to the point, far more respected. Tree's book is a most unusual one, and crowded with interest from cover to cover, and will appeal far beyond the narrow circle of persons who sit in the stalls, or mix with "the gods." Unconventional as the book is, there is not a particle of malice in it, and that is greatly to the credit of the author. Indeed, this is one of the few books written by an actor which an ordinary book-lover will find eminently readable, and its justification is that its author, like William Shakespeare, is so much more of a man than a player.

MIMNERMUS.

ON THOMAS PAINE

What impresses me most in all these attacks on Paine is their futility. The bitterest enemies, hunting every flaw in a character always exposed to the largest public view, could establish nothing but that he sometimes drank and that he was not clean. These are serious objections to a housemate. No doubt it is good to be clean and sober and conservative and do what your fathers did and shun ideals. But some of us occasionally like to think new thoughts and step out of the beaten track, and we like one who makes us do these things, even if he were a trifle untidy in his person. Here is a man who upset the world, and you say he did not brush his clothes. Here is a man who beat and shook conventions, who stirred up dusty and old titles till he showed their rotten vanity, and you complain because some of the dust got on himself. This is childishness.

Gamaliel Bradford in "Damaged Souls."

Some Elements of Paganism in Christianity

III.

It was Robert Taylor in his famous *Devil's Pulpit*, who pointed out, over 100 years ago, that the Virgin Mary was quite as unhistorical as Jesus Christ. He asked:—

Who was the Virgin Mary? i.e.: Who was she when she was at home?
Where was she born?
How did she live?
Where did she die?
Where did she come from?
Where did she go to?
Why was she a Virgin?
Why was her name Mary?
What does the name Mary mean?

and so on.

His analysis of the story from the sun-myth point of view was a fine piece of exposition for which he never got credit—naturally—from Christians, and for which he is even now attacked by some "Rationalists." Taylor, following Dupuis and Volney, but bringing to the question his own well-stored and analytical brain came to the conclusion that Mary was simply a prototype of Venus. He pointed out the fact that the word *Blessed*, in conjunction with the word *Virgin*, ruled out "the notion of barrenness." The blessedness "predicated of this virgin is the peculiar blessedness of *fruitfulness* and *abundance*." It was, indeed, the fruitful Mother-Goddess of antiquity, Ceres, Astarte, Venus, Isis, by whatever name she is called, who is represented now in the Christian Church by Mary; and Robert Taylor, without the advantage of modern studies of comparative religions, tried to make his contemporaries see this. That he did not altogether succeed was certainly not his fault.

The present-day reader, however, need not go to Taylor for his facts. Let him open the abridged edition of the *Golden Bough*, page 358, and he will find that Sir James Frazer, in one of the greatest classics on comparative religion ever written, a storehouse of myth, legend, and folk-lore, supports the author of the *Diegesis* and the *Devil's Pulpit* in almost every particular. Sir James Frazer says:—

An instructive relic of the long struggle (between Mithraism and Christianity) is preserved in our festival of Christmas, which the Church seems to have borrowed directly from its heathen rival. . . . No doubt the Virgin who thus conceived and bore a son on the 25th of December was the great Oriental goddess whom the Semites called the Heavenly Virgin or simply the Heavenly Goddess. In Semitic lands she was a form of Astarte. . . . The Christian Church chose to celebrate the birthday of its founder on the 25th of December in order to transfer the devotion of the heathen from the Sun to him who was called the Sun of Righteousness.

This is particularly interesting, because here we have not got the "rash" and "half-educated" Robert Taylor alone claiming Mary and Astarte—that is, Venus—as representing the same idea, but also one of the greatest scholars of our age. And one can go even further. Taylor, after showing how the whole idea of a virgin goddess must take its origin in the celestial sign of Virgo says, "that the Virgin Mary, the Grecian Venus and the Egyptian Isis, are each of them the same as the Virgin of the Zodiac, is a truth born out, not by one or two, but by a thousand analogies." And he adds, "This wonderful woman of the Zodiac is to this day worshipped throughout Christendom, under the denomination of the Virgin Mary. . . . The most beautiful hymn of the Roman Catholic

Service actually bears the title of Ave Maria Stella—hail Mary star."

What does Frazer say? :—

In art the figure of Isis suckling the infant Horus is so like that of the Madonna and child, that it has sometimes received the adoration of ignorant Christians. And to Isis in her later character of patroness of Mariners the Virgin Mary owes her beautiful epithet of *Stella Maris*, "Star of the Sea."

The deductions that Taylor made from a comparison of the various histories of the Mother-Goddess of pagan mythology have thus been vindicated by a modern writer of Frazer's calibre. And no one can read the century old lecture in the *Devil's Pulpit* entitled "Virgo Paritura," and the *Golden Bough*, without being convinced not merely of Mary's unhistoricity, but of the fact that there is nothing more thoroughly pagan in the whole of Christianity than its ridiculous nonsense about the "Mother of God." And Frazer insists that "the stately ritual of Isis, with its shaven and tonsured priests, its matins and vespers, its tinkling music, its baptisms and aspersions of holy water, its solemn processions, its jewelled images of the Mother of God, presented many points of similarity to the pomps and ceremonies of Catholicism. The resemblance need not be purely accidental."

From Egypt, the worship of the Mother of God (or Gods) with her lover or son, went to Rome—and also to most of the European countries. And the curious thing is that this religion seems to have produced in its devotees something of the same fervour that characterises believers in Christianity at all times. Frazer here is a valuable authority, for he says:—

The ecstatic frenzies, which were mistaken for divine inspiration, the mangling of the body, the theory of a new birth and the remission of sins through the shedding of blood, have all their origin in savagery. . . . Their true character was often disguised under a decent veil of allegorical or philosophical interpretation which probably sufficed to impose upon the rapt and enthusiastic worshippers reconciling even the more cultivated of them to things which otherwise must have filled them with horror and disgust.

Eating a saviour-god and drinking his blood is about the crudest and silliest of these beliefs which no amount of philosophizing can reconcile with common-sense. Yet millions of supposedly rational men and women believe in the rite and solemnly practise it. I shall have something more to say about the whole ceremony later in this series of articles; yet it is but one of the many beliefs in Christianity saturated with Paganism; and its survival can only be understood by a systematic study of the great religions of antiquity. For my own part, the more I read along these lines, the more I marvel at human credulity and stupidity. Go where one will, Egypt, Palestine, India, Babylon, China, and the most absurd ceremonies in connexion with god-eating or other pagan rites have been discovered and practised by intelligent people. We even find someone claiming to be a god actually eating himself and drinking his own blood—thus sacrificing himself to himself. Nothing seems too silly for religion.

With reference to Mr. C. Harpur's interesting communication on the reasons why Christians made Sunday their Sabbath-day instead of Saturday (in the *Freethinker* of July 7) I regret I have not come across any authority for his statements. Perhaps he will indicate where I can find it.

H. CUTNER.

But when to mischief mortals bend their will,
How soon they find fit instruments of ill.—*Pope*.

Theology Under Fire

A TROPICAL SCENE FROM WEST AFRICA

IT was no doubt puzzling that four men and a woman, the only five whites among this plethora of scared Africans, should spend their spare time in discussion. However much Martha Oaks might resent Dick's agnosticism, she admired his knowledge. No matter how scathing might be Dacre's contributions, she knew him to be a man of high integrity.

She had not much use for Loder; and preferred him to refrain from flouting at her orthodoxy. As for Billy Barley he was generally content—like the Yorkshireman—to hear all and say nowt. But the missionary-surgeon realized how much all four men appreciated her labours for the suffering black men. Never did a real quarrel arise, although quite bitter things were frequently uttered.

"I hope I'm not disturbing you boys," she would say cheerily, where they might be sitting smoking in one or other of the huts; "My labours for the day are ended, and I'd like to be mentally aroused by a little bout of verbal fisticuffs."

She lowered her dumpy little form against the cushions of a wicker-chair (Loder had borrowed several from her reserve stores; and therefore his place was the best furnished of the bamboo huts), clicked her denture into position, and turned enquiring eyes on the others.

Dacre and Dick had been exchanging notes on the comparative merits of Bennett and Galsworthy. They smiled at each other interrogatively, before they drew their own chairs a little nearer.

"My only objection," said Bain, "is that we never carry on where we left off, Miss Oaks. We go on beating about the same old bush."

The missionary smiled a trifle sadly. She was dressed in a blue linen gown, longer in the skirt than was the ruling mode; and her blunt-toed black shoes were primly set together, her plump hands loosely clasped over her compressed knees. Her gray hair (she had aged greatly in appearance since she and Dick had first met in Omatsi) was plaited and coiled loosely on top of her head. Albeit a little more neatly combed, it still gave the boy the whimsical impression of having been originally picked up as a wig by a chiffonier.

She said, with slightly compressed lips: "We get no forrader, Mr. Bain, because you and Mr. Dacre are always unanimously two to one. After all, I come to these arguments from a sincere wish to make you see the truth of revealed religion; not for myself to be converted to your pernicious and dangerous views."

Dick laughed at her show of provocative venom, and a pause ensued. Her denture was again adjusted by a roving tongue; and her quick-glancing eyes regarded their polite but somewhat derisive faces. "Then again," she added, "All we Christians ask from unbelievers is to let live in peace."

"Let live in peace," exclaimed Loder, circulating the cigarettes: "Isn't that rather rich, Miss Oaks? I'm a Protestant, Church of England, myself, and I used to be a choir-boy. But that 'live-in-peace' protest might better have come from the free-thinking camp, don't you think?"

Miss Oaks turned her head from side to side in a slow and emphatic denial. "If we missionaries were let alone to do our jobs, we would Christianize the pagans more quickly. We are criticized too much and too often. What do you say to that, Mr. Bain?"

Dick looked thoughtful. "Let alone, Miss Oaks? How can you possibly be let alone?"

Warmly she demanded: "And why not?"

"Because," answered Dick, "All religions occupy

a position of such privilege and power, in virtue of their claiming a peculiar hold on eternity, that we, who are content with the unlimited possibilities of earth, cannot but protest."

"Again, why?"

"Because you hide your unproven postulates behind the law, whereas a Freethinker finds himself unable to state his views in face of unjust Blasphemy Laws. The dice are loaded—in the Christian's favour."

"You call the Blasphemy Laws unjust laws, Mr. Bain?" cried the missionary angrily; "Would you have the name of God taken in vain?"

Dick shook his head courteously. "Not at all, Miss Oaks. The word God, in its esoteric sense, has literary values of a high order. The plain truth, however, is that Christians have no more peculiar authority over what is, as yet, Unknown, than have the common laity; hence the laity cannot afford to leave religionists alone! For religion interferes everywhere. It interferes with education; it interferes with marriage; it interferes with the family; and most of all, it interferes with a man's right to think out things for himself. Because of the layman's weak acceptance of religious pretences, the Salvation-by-Another's Sacrifice, religion stands as one of the most cowardly and disastrous illusions of humanity's progress from ape to superman."

"Ape to superman?" Martha sat bolt upright in her chair. A stullen scarlet suffused her pasty skin. Into her eyes had come an expression of shame and rage—intense, concentrated, fierce.

"Darwinian!" she snorted. Her self-control did not return until after a long pause. Then she said coldly: "And what, pray, will your superman be like, when he arrives? A heartless threshing machine, I opine?"

Dacre interposed softly: "Not necessarily heartless, Miss Oaks, seeing that the heart feeds the brain. The confident thinker is bound to be rational. Both superstition and idleness crumble in the furnace of thought. All religions—or their ethical substitutes—will eventually die from the head downwards. Even so relentless a fighter as Colonel Ingersoll was a humanist, remember: the most staunch of friends, the most gentle of fathers, and the most truthful of witnesses."

"He was an infidel, Mr. Dacre," said Martha stubbornly; "and he died an infidel's painful death."

Dacre laughed outright. "That's exactly where you Christians seem always to hit below the belt," he cried. "Ingersoll died no more painful a death than did Archbishop Benson or Cardinal Newman. He was born, he lived, he loved, he suffered, he died and was buried. . . . That is all that can be said of any man or woman who ever lived. No Christian can deprive Ingersoll's memory of the glory of uttering one of the finest verdicts on human existence known to literature."

Dick filled the pause. "'The time to be happy is now,' he quoted softly; "'the place to be happy is here; and the way to be happy is to make other people happy.'"

The old trader nodded his approval. "Exactly so, Dick, exactly so. And, while carrying out that Ingersollian ideal, it behoves the sincere rationalist to expose sham in all its forms."

"You don't call our faith a sham, surely?" cried the missionary-surgeon with great energy. "Why, in teaching the black man physical decency alone, we are justified of our claim to be bettering his lot."

Dacre grinned ironically. "I might quote Havlock Ellis's verdict on the South Sea Islands, Martha. In mercy I'll forebear; but there we see, and have seen, a happy, natural, gentle, abstemious and care-free race put into bathing-drawers and mother-hub-

bards; and—but why talk about the Papuan's degeneration into vice? We know the truth, and that is enough to make us blush. You are referring more, I infer, to the clothing of the naked African bushman by the Missions' imposition of garments? Yet, dear lady, only just across the river, I have observed an attractive Araba girl lingering outside a trading-store. She wore only one garment—a lapa wound around her hips and waist. Knowing she was entering the presence of a European trader, she has become so acutely shamed by her tribal conception of which is and which is not—I lack a word, Barley."

"I suggest pudenda?" said the police officer, holding out a lighted match to Dick.

"Thanks, Billy," Dacre continued, "Let us say pudenda—that the young negress has stopped outside for a moment, removed the cloth from her loins and waist, and covered her bosom—tribally *tabu*, mark you!—but thus leaving exposed, in all innocence, what we white folk esteem the very centre of sex."

He looked quietly at the now-bristling Martha. "I felt that, to illustrate Dick Bain's thesis, I might be permitted to relate this incident in your presence, Miss Oaks, in view of your profession and your scientific knowledge. Pardon me, if I have offended."

He had thrust his clenched hands between his knees, as if in sudden earnestness he would crush them to pulp. "Yes, Yes!" he added passionately, "It is Christian prudery of that kind which hurts most of all. To broad-minded men, who know and love the subject races of earth, it is the unpardonable sin. It closes the gates of Eden. Let us talk this out a moment, Martha. . . . Before we start converting the black man, we ought to form a sound idea of what he is being converted *from*! Tribal beliefs are not all ugly. Many of them are very beautiful; and from the ethical point of view, they made the gentle, honest, virtuous and truthful Omatsian that I remember thirty years ago. . . . But look at him to-day, after three decades of the missions."

"You would not suggest, Dacre, that he has changed for the worse?" demanded the missionary with a baleful gleam in her eyes.

Dacre bowed. "Infinitely for the worse, dear Martha. The dogma with which he has been over-weighted may have Europeanized his appearance and refined his tastes. But has it made him more sober, more trustworthy—more naturally human and receptive?"

He was breathing audibly, and his black eyes were on fire behind his spectacles' thick lenses.

"He has at least been given the hope of eternal life," interjected Martha Oaks tensely. "The African yearns, yearns most intensely, for an assurance of the immortality of his soul. Only Christianity can give him that sure and certain sign. . . ."

Dacre rumbled his hair in a half-comical, half-despairing manner. "Oh—for the Lord's sake, Martha dear! Sometimes you give me a positive pain. You do indeed!"

J. M. STUART-YOUNG.

Onitsha, Nigeria, W.C.A.

(To be concluded)

The Church found persuasion powerless to arrest the spread of heresy. St. Bernard, Foulques de Neuilly, St. Dominic, St. Francis, had successively tried the rarest eloquence to convince, and the example of the sublimest self-abnegation to convert. Only force remained, and it was pitilessly employed. To this end the Inquisition was developed into a settled institution, manned by the Mendicant Orders, who were now utilized to suppress by force.—H. C. Lea.

Morton's Fork

EVERYONE remembers "Ten Sixty Six"; it is the one historical fact that lingers in the mind of those long since left school. Of the further important and not so important historical data crammed into uninterested minds perhaps only two items float hazily in a sea of confused dates, wars and kings. They are, in order of importance, Henry's wives and Morton's Fork.

Morton was the astute Chancellor who collected revenue; if the barons kept up large estates and impressive retinues, they were sufficiently well off to pay handsome taxes; if they did no such thing, then they were hoarding their wealth and could equally well afford a little for the King. Either he stabbed these gentry with one prong of the fork, or with the other! A cunning lad was Morton!

His methods are copied now, in 1935, by would-be Church Dictators; except that they are perhaps more greedy than he was, they want something on both prongs.

The Marriage State is steeped in antiquity, no-one seems to know exactly when it became a definite status; living together "as man and wife" is as old as life itself. Eventually this cohabiting was recognized by the Church as an established fact, and duly adorned with fitting ceremony and ritual; subsequently the Law of the State stepped in and legalized this association of male and female, also adding its moiety of formality.

As civilization advanced it became necessary to lift mankind from the level of beasts and to protect womanhood. The married state exists, we are told, to prevent that which is variously described, but which we might politely call succumbing to sex appeal.

So far, so good. In a highly complicated form of society it is obviously desirable that there should be deterrents to animalism and an outlet to passion; merely from the cold-blooded logical standpoint is this so without having regard to the finer question of that emotion, devotion, love or whatever we choose to call that feeling.

But now we are prodded with the other prong of the clerical fork. The edict has gone forth from the Bishops assembled that the married state is for the procreation of children only.

This hideous birth-control business, an established fact at least among all but the very unintelligent, is not recognized by the Church.

The theme is bound up with considerations of some complexity, illness, poverty, age and the like but standing out beacon-like amid the blather of grandmothers and trumpeting of fossil-like celibates is the fact that, in theory at any rate, something is given with one hand, Married State, and taken away with the other hand, Birth-control.

What an illogical conclusion! To stop indiscriminate evil by providing a legal outlet and then, several breaths later, to stop the using of that outlet, should throw us back where we started.

But we have the Law. Marriage is now, and we must congratulate ourselves that it is so, a legal as well as a "Church" state.

Whatever harsh things are said about the law it moves a little more with the changing times than the Church; moreover, the Law occasionally yields to public opinion, the Church never.

The Law and Public Opinion acknowledge human frailty; the former ultimately puts into effect the

latter. It imposes restrictions, it is true, but does not attempt to thrust harsh and rigid doctrines down the throats of Man.

By its unbending and entirely archaic attitude towards the very human problem of marriage, marriage relationships, divorce and Birth-control, the Church places itself yet one step further from understanding of human lives; it grows deadlier with each clerical pronouncement. Its Morton's Fork prods the everyday man and woman, not into more activity and interest in things clerical, but pricks them into resentment. To pass judgment upon a matter of so vital and so human a topic is to step from the shadow into bright sunlight, in an attempt to use shaded eyes with the efficiency of those accustomed to the glare.

Morton has come down through the ages as a cunning rogue who deserved a better fate; the modern counterpart deserves no such memory.

A. F. WILLIAMS.

Acid Drops

An unending discussion has arisen as to the correct rendering of a word in the Hundredth Psalm. Did the Holy Ghost mean that we should say, "We are His flock," or that "We are His folk"? The Methodist Hymnal decides on "Folk," but everybody else will see so natural a description of God's followers in the word "Flock," that we cannot think of them as anything but sheep. It seems that the earlier versions of the metrical form of the Psalms as well as most later authorities chose "Flock" as the divinely intended word. Christians must continue to call themselves a flock until they cease to be sheepish.

Ultra-Catholics simply will not hear of divorce. For them it is sufficient to point out that "Our Lord"—who, if he ever lived, which at least is doubtful—objected to divorce; and being single himself, he must have known all about marriage and its responsibilities. Therefore his was the final word. Drunkenness, insanity, sadistic cruelty, habitual theft, filthy or abominable traits, even murder, should provide no grounds for divorce. "Our Lord" said he was against it and that is final. Any Bishop who tries to bring "Our Lord" into line a little more with common sense, with modern ideas, even with humanism, is branded as a hopeless reactionary by Catholics. As one of them asks, referring to the provision the State—wiser than "Our Lord"—has made for obtaining divorce, does the Bishop of St. Edmundsbury "really believe that a statute of Lord Palmerston can override for Christians the law of Christ?"

The answer is that Christians all over the world are taking advantage of the State laws in favour of divorce. Both Roman and Anglo-Catholics, Protestants and Presbyterians, Christian Scientists and Mormons all go in for divorce if they find it necessary for their happiness. The "law of Christ" is rightly derided in the matter. Divorced people re-marry when they can in a Church—if they are professing Christians—and, in any case, can be re-married by the State. And the fact that more and more divorces are granted by the State, and more and more people are married and remarried by the State proves conclusively that, however much "blarney" is talked about "Our Lord," in practice he is simply and rightly dispensed with, which is all to the good.

The Rev. T. G. Jalland spoke recently before a gathering of the "Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament." We hope we are not doing this gentleman an injustice if we claim him at one with Roman Catholics in believing a true Christian can eat his god and drink his blood with

satisfaction and advantage. Mr. Jalland knew "of the efforts which were made for a closer co-operation between the so-called schools of thoughts in the English Church with a view to confronting the common enemy of secularism with a united resistance," but it was "a lamentable fact" that Catholics and Evangelicals were at loggerheads over the "Blessed Sacrament." Some Christians believed you really and truly ate the living body of "Our Lord" when you swallowed the wafer; others thought the ceremony was just beautiful symbolism; still others, that no matter what magical and divine words were uttered by a priest, the wafer remained a wafer and nothing else.

This did not make for that "united" front so necessary to combat secularism, and Mr. Jalland wanted to make it clear that their evangelical friends should understand that most of his own sect preferred "Holy Communion celebrated by a priest in a surplice who was fasting, than High Mass at which the celebrant had broken his fast." If that did not do the trick—that is, defeat "the common enemy of Secularism"—we should be hard put to say what could. We think nothing could possibly frighten the average Secularist more than seeing a priest in a surplice who was fasting celebrating Holy Communion. But we think the effect would still be greater if some of the war-paint of an African witch-doctor was added. A native mask properly painted would cause the devil himself to shriek with fright let alone a poor erring Secularist.

The Rev. F. H. George thinks that "Christ's teaching is always simple and direct, and there are many ways of explaining it away. In the end you will always find it best to take it literally." This literally takes our breath away! The first thing a parson or a priest or even an average Christian does when confronted by one of the sayings of Jesus is either (1) to say he never said it; (2) or that it is a faulty translation; (3) or that Jesus did not speak in English or Greek, and therefore the "inspired" writer may have got it down wrongly; or (4) that it was not meant to be taken literally; or (5) that it is a beautiful piece of Oriental imagery; or (6) that it really means the *opposite* of what it says. This accounts for the thousands of Biblical commentaries in existence all explaining what Jesus meant or tried to say in language which other commentaries either do not understand, or, in turn, explain away. What a game it all is!

Speaking before the Indian Church Aid Association, the Bishop of Nagpur seemed very pessimistic. He said "there is truth in the suggestion that Christianity in India, has ceased to have the influence it once exerted." He put down the cessation partly to Ghandi and partly "to the results of education." The Government was responsible for teaching in India, and to show its impartiality (the Christian) religion was not taught. The way to remedy this, was generously to support the Church schools for which the Bishop appealed. In other words so that Hindu children can be brought up as Christians give Church schools in India plenty of money. We should like to see what our unemployed would say if the Bishop of Nagpur were to speak like that before them. Would they like to see good money thrown away uselessly in India while their own children here were being sacrificed to poverty and misery? Hasn't this missionary ramp lasted long enough?

No fewer than 76 medical men, we understand, have signed a petition with bishops and laymen against a Birth-Control Clinic recently opened in Slough. They seem to be all horrified at the idea that the State should help such a clinic and give practical advice to those people who require it. If doctors are really against contraceptives, it is a pity that more of them do not publicly give reasons for their opposition, and explain why so few doctors have, generally speaking, large families. Are we to understand that the above 76 medical men never use contraceptives, never have done in the past, and never will in the future, even if their wives claim the right to have a say in the matter? However, one thing can be

said with certainty. Birth-Control has come to stay, and nothing either doctors or Roman Catholics can say or do will prevent the spread of contraceptive knowledge.

The new Archbishop of Westminster, Dr. Hinsley, speaking on the education question before a large number of Catholic teachers, declared that he was "not opposed to secular education." In fact, "the Church has always favoured true education." By "true" education, the Archbishop meant "secular" education plus religious education, and no doubt his pious hearers were delighted to find that after all the Church really advocated "secular" education provided there was plenty of religion thrown in as a make-weight. The Archbishop was out for "Catholic schools with Catholic teachers under Catholic control with Catholic atmosphere," and all he wanted was that the majority of people in this country who are not Catholics and mostly hate Catholicism, should pay for such a scheme. The impudence of these people seems to grow; and if only the majority of citizens in England can see further than their noses, they will also see that *real* secular education—no religion whatever in State-aided schools—is the only solution to the question.

Lord Justice Slesser, the eminent Anglo-Catholic, with that penetrating analysis of contemporary events which distinguishes so many judges, declared the other day that "the world outside the small sphere of professing Christians has no faith." It is something not only to discover this tremendous fact, but to admit it. Needless to say, he added that "many are beginning to wonder if the decay of religion is not the cause" of—"the decay of reason, of the horror of war, and of the toleration of atrocities." If he means that throwing overboard Christianity may bring about war, he really should explain why the "Great" War of 1914-1918 was fought almost entirely by Christian nations. So religious, for example, were the Germans that each German soldier had a belt on which was inscribed, "God with us," and chaplains or priests formed part of all the armies. If Italy and Abyssinia go to war, it will be fought between two Christian nations. Nearly all the nations who are piling up armaments and signing treaties about increasing armies and navies are—as nations—thoroughly Christian. While the most terrible wars in the past 1500 years have almost always been fought by Christians, often for religion alone.

This little trick of putting on to the shoulders of Freethinkers the responsibility for the "horror of war," "awful atrocities," or "the decay of reason" comes well from the mouth of a Christian. No religion persecuted more than Christianity when it had the power, and it was the humanism of great Freethinkers (among others) that made Christians ashamed of their torture chambers, their foul prisons and their ghastly wars. It is true "faith" is probably less now among intelligent people than ever before; but it is these same people who loathe war, armaments, torture, and imprisonment for the "crime" of thinking freely. But Lord Justice Slesser knows to whom he is speaking. The average Christian will swallow almost anything.

The Christian Church in India is faced with a very big problem, says the Rev. C. Whitworth, S.S.J.E. What is going to happen to the 150,000 odd Christian converts in India? They have all imbibed the truth, beauty, and morals of Christianity, and they ought to be ready to take their place in a Christian world. Unfortunately, much as the rev. gentleman deplores the fact, he feels he must speak the truth. Many Hindu boys taught in English schools in India, he claims, "have a low standard of morality in such matters as honesty, beauty, truthfulness and purity." Moreover, "in a residential hotel or holiday camp, it would seem almost impossible to stop the pilfering of food." They also hate work outside the schoolroom, and insist on servants to carry their school-books; and "their lack of sportsmanship in games is really distressing." Then, again, there is a "lack of reverence for things of the Spirit"—they are *not* "deeply

religious," as is commonly thought, especially as they often "associate themselves with a Protestantism which has never heard of Tractarian Movement, or even of the Catholic revival." Altogether, this business of converting Hindus seems to be a dismal failure, and we offer our sympathy to Mr. Whitworth.

Mr. Lee-Hankey, the well-known artist, has been commissioned to paint a panel for a church in Wiltshire, representing "Our Lord" and his disciples. Mr. Lee-Hankey believes "it is possible to paint from the traditional representations an authentic portrait of 'Our Lord.'" This seems a sublime example of real faith. Apart from the fact that there is no evidence that "Our Lord" ever lived at all, the "traditional" portraits, that is, the earliest known ones, are about as different from the later ones as it is possible to imagine. Jesus was often shown as a fish or a lamb, and when later he was given a human form it was that of a sort of colourless youth of eighteen. Most of his disciples are also supposed to have been somewhere near this age. Mr. Lee-Hankey, however, seems to have painted Jesus looking not unlike Albrecht Durer, and many of the apostles as quite middle-aged or old. However, there is the usual halo—certainly a relic of the sun myth—and the "mystical Dove, the emblem of the Holy Spirit." So everything must be right.

The *Church Times* considers that "England is not, and never has been, a Protestant country." The reason given for this delicious outburst is that "when, against the will of the great majority of the people, it was severed from the body of Western Christendom, England began to lose religion altogether, and to-day as the result of the mis-called 'Reformation,' it is a Pagan country." Thus the Puritans, the Wesleyans, the Methodists, the Congregationalists, the Baptists, the Plymouth Brethren and the other 101 sects of Christianity are not really Protestants; they are Pagans—or, at least, they headed for Paganism. In fact, the Evangelical movement away from Popery really is responsible for the "unbelief" of England, and the reaction against "Christian" education.

The millions of books and pamphlets against Catholicism, written by "Protestants" for three centuries are so much waste paper. The Catholic Church has all along been, and still is, "the friend and patron of sound learning and education"; and "the Catholic is, indeed, a far more thorough Rationalist than Professor MacBride," for example. But why stop at "Rationalism"? Why not call the Roman and Anglo Church the one true "Atheistic" Christian Church in the world, where truth, beauty, love, morality, justice, education, and liberty, are all honoured? And which, in addition, denounces members of all other churches and denominations as hopeless reactionaries. The *Church Times* does not like "the air of condescending superiority adopted by Protestants." We thoroughly enjoy the wonderful air of superiority adopted by Anglo-Catholics.

Mr. Hugh Walpole, the novelist, declares that Noah seems an old and familiar friend. He puts it down to the Bible being part of our daily life. But surely a better reason is that almost every child in this country for centuries has had a Noah's Ark to play with. To gather together so many animals in one box appeals to almost every child; and there never has been a more popular present than a Noah's Ark. Moreover, the story of the Flood, absurd from every scientific point of view, is good *story-telling*. It is on a par with the story of Aladdin's Lamp; and even Mr. Walpole must admit that Aladdin is quite as well known as Noah. The truth is that the art of fiction in the hands of a master is responsible for the continued popularity of these stories. The religious part has nothing to do with it.

Dr. James Reid, D.D., says "The air is full of ideas that seem to portend the defeat of the Christian faith." Dr. Reid might have left it by just saying that "the world is full of ideas."

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

FOR Distributing and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—W. James, 58., F. A. W. Gubbins, 108.

H. SINCLAIR.—There are a few issues of the Bradlaugh and Ingersoll Centenary numbers for sale, price, post free 3½d. each.

F. JOHNS (Fiji).—We shall be pleased to obtain for you the books required. Where possible state the publishers, and if a cloth edition is wanted. This service is available for all our overseas readers.

S. MERRIFIELD.—Thanks for cutting.

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The "*Freethinker*" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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

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Sugar Plums

Mr. Cohen is away from the office enjoying a brief and much-needed holiday, and must ask the indulgence of correspondents until his return, which will be in time for the next issue.

Meantime may we once again impress upon our friends the good that may be done by introducing this paper to new readers. We have been pleased to hear from many who have, thanks to this form of help, made their first acquaintance with the *Freethinker*. There are very many thousands of potential new readers in the country, and it would be something to be proud of if we could manage to secure a moderate percentage of them.

The editor of the *Christian World* is disturbed over the growth of Roman Catholic influence in the B.B.C. But is the growth of Roman Catholic influence any worse, or can it be better justified than the influence, in the same quarter, of Christianity as a whole? We never noticed any objection raised by the *Christian World* to the impudent declaration of the B.B.C., that one of its objects was the preservation of Christianity. That, we presume, was because this fell into line with the policy of the B.B.C. as a whole. But when there is a tendency for one Christian body to gain at the expense of the others, the *Christian World* confesses to grave "misgivings." No misgivings are felt when an institution that is substantially a Government monopoly, financed by the community, without regard to the religious or non-

religious beliefs of the subscribers is openly used in the influence of Christian sectarianism. But when one particular body gets more than its share, the *Christian World* is troubled with "misgivings"—that its own party is not being treated fairly.

If we were not dealing with a Christian paper one might have hopes that some attention would be paid to principle, and that it would be recognized that, in the long run, fair play is the better policy. The B.B.C. has no real business to concern itself with the propaganda of religion at all—none except the activity of that prize bigot Sir John Reith and his committee of parsons. Or, alternatively, if any such highly debatable thing as religion is discussed on the wireless, every form of opinion, religious or non-religious, should be given in an authoritative form. As it is, religion rules the roost, with a very occasional dash of mild heresy intended to give the B.B.C. the opportunity that it does not confine itself to religions. Meanwhile, a mainly sabbatarian programme is provided on Sundays, with several hours on which all "secular" subjects are shut out so that nothing can interfere with the Church services.

Professor Karl Barth, the eminent theologian, has been dismissed from his chair in Bonn University, because he is not a sound Hitlerite. The Professor is at present safe in Switzerland, unless Hitler and his gang manage to assassinate him. Professor Barth says that the number of convinced Nazis in Germany is rapidly decreasing. That is inevitable. A dictatorship of any kind has no use for conviction, it develops obedience only. That is why, as we have so often pointed out, every dictatorship makes for a lower ethical and intellectual level. The better types are progressively weeded out, and an increasingly lower type rules, until from sheer disgust the people create a better form of Government. The intellectual demoralization is proceeding at a very rapid pace, and the best friends of the German people can only hope that the process will be intensified. It is a bad outlook, but the best in the circumstances.

Mr. Baldwin remarked recently that his salary does not provide enough to make ends meet. That kind of statement is often made, and we believe, so far as the heads of the Government is concerned, it is made with truth. Few Prime Ministers have found the official salary enough to meet their expenses. That is not as it should be; and £5,000 a year ought to be enough. It is not, and the reason is not that Prime Ministers are, as a rule spendthrifts, or that they aim at a too expensive mode of life. It is due to the intense snobbery that rules in the very highest circles, and which imposes upon others the necessity for lavish entertainments and unnecessary expenditure. There is no reason whatever why a man who gives his services to the State should be called upon to provide what every Prime Minister is expected to provide. If one or two Prime Ministers had the courage to set this convention at defiance and decline to do anything beyond the necessary requirements of his office, we might see an end put to men having to pay from their private purse for discharging public duties. The provision of showy and expensive entertainments ought not to be part of the necessary business of a Prime Minister. That could be left to the leaders of "Society."

The Roman Catholic Archbishop of St. Andrews and Edinburgh alleges that Roman Catholics have been subjected to unspeakable attacks of violence, abuse, and insult in Edinburgh recently. He pays a tribute to the self-restraint of the Catholic body, and is reported to have said, had not that forbearance been heroically sustained bloodshed would undoubtedly have ensued. Freethinkers can join in a denunciation of the violence, abuse, and insult. As to the self-restraint and heroic forbearance of Roman Catholics, well, if Roman Catholics at Freethought meetings do not quite reach that standard, there is the history of the Roman Church to support the Archbishop.

Swansea usually provides excellent audiences at Mr. G. Whitehead's meetings, and the Executive of the N.S.S. has arranged for a visit lasting two weeks commencing to-day (July 21). Meetings will be held each evening, details will be found in the Lecture Notices column, and Pioneer Press literature will be on sale. The local N.S.S. Branch will co-operate at all the meetings, and are expecting an increase in activity as a result of the two weeks' effort.

Messrs. Brighton and Clayton are busy on the platform in Durham, Northumberland, and Lancashire, and report results which are very encouraging. The Executive of the N.S.S. is responsible and would extend the area of such work if the financial way was clear. Both the speakers are admirably suited to that style of propaganda, which is not easy, and which calls for a varied assortment of platform virtues, which both speakers possess.

The West London and West Ham Branches N.S.S. are arranging an outing to Southend on Sunday, July 21. Trains leave Fenchurch Street Station every twenty minutes, fare 3s. 6d. day return. Will all Members and Friends joining in this outing please meet opposite Pleasant Road (near the Kursaal), at 12 noon. It is intended to hold meetings in conjunction with the local saints.

"Wisdom" from New York

THE Trinity League of New York has started, under Roman Catholic auspices, a determined assault against Freethought. We have read with curiosity, not wholly free from amusement, the first issue of its "Official Publication," called *Wisdom*. The title selected for this periodical is a capital example of the innate modesty of its three advertised committees, (1) The Editorial Board, (2) The Editorial Staff, and (3) The Executive Staff.

The title page of this fiery fanatical first number bears on one side the sign of the Cross embedded inside a Shamrock, which is surrounded by a circle broken into three sections—just about as comprehensible as the Trinity for which it most likely stands as symbol. On the other side is a hen or bird of paradise, or possibly the Holy Ghost—anyway it is some sort of overfed bird, full of tummy and wings and wide-spread tail, flying nowhere at all. In the centre is the most inappropriate symbol of an open book. As, however, the pages at which the very open book is open contain merely a number of "noughts" (headed Alpha and Omega in Greek letters) we presume the only "Wisdom" we are likely to obtain therefrom is nothing at all from beginning to end.

The periodical itself shows no such "wisdom." Instead of a discreet silence, every page has in large capital letters that gem of Christian courtesy in discussion "The fool hath said in his heart, there is no God." Its one "picture" is of a mountain scene showing a traveller wondering which way he should go. He is studying a signpost which indicates that ATHEISM is the RIGHT way, and Theism the Left. The sun is clearly setting on the Theism side, so doubtless the wanderer will stay where he is till morning, and then delight in taking the road to Atheism where the sun rises.

An Editorial, abusive enough in intention, pays a high compliment to Freethought, by proclaiming its many triumphs:—

The blighting, soul-destroying plague of the day is not, we think, so much the economic and social maze in which the world flounders, but the deadly trend toward indifferentism and the abandonment of the idea of God. We know that in Russia, Spain and Mexico, and in other countries the voices of little

children are raised in unholy blasphemy toward high heaven in denial of the Father of all. But we also are aware of the insidious and diabolical trend toward Atheism which is fast permeating the press, drama, art, education, science, philosophy, music, government and legislation; yes, and even religion—in this country.

An article headed "Share the Wealth" suggested at first that *Wisdom* wanted us to revert to the alleged primitive Christian "all things in common." Not quite all. The "Wealth" which *Wisdom* thinks ought to be shared by all is merely the exceeding great riches of the gospel. All other forms of wealth are to remain with those to whom God has given them! In the same article *Wisdom* gently hints that all unbelievers are bastards: "a brotherhood without a common Father must needs be a brotherhood of illegitimates."

The Rev. Father Daniels, in an article headed "No God is Their God," strings together Shaw, Wells, Joyce and other writers as "profligate determinists," whose "fortunes have been furthered by the licentious prostitution of their art." The pessimistic author concludes his article thus:—

Godlessness has made its insidious inroads. Contemporary literature has furthered its egregiousness. The American people have swallowed the hook and the sinker but they still nibble at the line. The modern printed page has advanced the cause of irreligion, atheism, corruption, crime and vice. And the bird of evil has lighted on the gullible, the indifferent, the impressionable and the mentally lax.

The sense of humour our new contemporary indulges in is of somewhat primitive flavour. In alleged-to-be "lighter vein" is a conversation between a domestic cat and its kitten on the subject of "Union Square," where the New York Atheists meet. Referring to Thomas Paine as "T. Ache" is Catholic wit.

The question "Does Science Deny the Existence of God?" is answered to the editor's satisfaction, in the negative. It seems that all scientists are becoming converted:—

Not only is the Scientist not an Atheist, but often he is no longer an Agnostic. Many have taken a positive favourable attitude towards the existence of God and indeed the God of Catholic Theology.

It is fortunate that *Wisdom* does not give us the names of any of these converted scientists.

The existence of such a journal as *Wisdom* should greatly encourage our New York friends, to whose admirable labours this publication is a distinct tribute.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

Voltaire in England

I.

No passage in the eventful life of Voltaire is more important or more obscure than his sojourn in this country. It was here he lit the torch of Freethought with which he fired the continent. Here he mastered the arguments of Bolingbroke, Toland, Shaftesbury, Collins and Woolston, which he afterwards used with such effect on the Christian superstition. Here he imbibed the philosophy of Locke and the science of Newton. Indeed, it may be said there is hardly one of Voltaire's important works but bears traces of his visit to our country. Yet of this momentous epoch of his life, the records are scanty. When he grew famous, every letter and anecdote was preserved; but in 1727 Voltaire was but a young man of promise. Carlyle, in the tenth Book of his *Frederick the Great*, says: "But mere inanity and darkness visible reign

in all his Biographies over this period of his life, which was, above all others, worth investigating." Mr. Churton Collins, who with praiseworthy diligence has retraced the ground, has frequently to confess that in various particulars his research has been unrewarded. Even with regard to the length of his stay in this country some uncertainty prevailed; Carlyle said two years, Duvernet three. Mr. Collins fixes it at two years and eight months.

As Mr. Collins in his interesting monograph does not explain why Voltaire came to England, the story may bear re-telling. Dining at the Duke of Sully's table, he presumed to differ from the Chevalier de Rohan—Chabot, a relative of Cardinal Rohan. The aristocrat asked, "Who is that young fellow who talks so loud?" "Monsieur le Chevalier," replied Voltaire, "it is a man who does not bear a great name, but who knows how to honour the name he does bear." Picture that with Voltaire's flashing eye and deep majestic voice. It was insufferable that the son of a bourgeois should thus speak his mind to a son of a Duke. A few days afterwards, when again dining with the Duke, he was called down by a false message, seized and caged by ruffians until a voice cried, "Enough." That word was a fresh blow, for the young poet recognized the voice of the Chevalier. Burning with rage, he returned to the Duke and asked him to assist in obtaining redress. But his grace shrugged his shoulders and gave no assistance. Voltaire never visited the Duke again, but erased his ancestor's name from *La Henriade*. He retired to study English and fencing, then reappeared with a challenge to the Chevalier, who accepted it, but informed his relations. It was against the law for a commoner to challenge a nobleman, and the next morning, instead of meeting de Rohan, he met officers armed with a *letter de cachet*, consigning him to the Bastille. After over a month's incarceration, he was liberated on condition that he quitted France. No doubt Voltaire felt keenly the indignity to which he had been subjected. In a letter of instruction written from England to his agent, he says: "If my debtors profit by my misfortune and absence to refuse payment, you must not trouble to bring them to reason; 'tis but a trifle." Yet a book has been written on Voltaire's avarice.

Voltaire arrived in England on Whit-Monday, 1726. He disembarked near Greenwich and witnessed the Fair. All seemed bright to him. The park and river were alive with animation. Here there was no Bastille, no fear of the persecution of the great or the spies of the police. He had excellent introductions. Bolingbroke he had met in exile at La Source in 1721, and he had learnt to regard the illustrious Englishman who possessed "all the learning of his country and all the politeness of ours." Now their positions were reversed. Voltaire was the exile; Bolingbroke, at any rate for a while, the host. But he had other English friends, notably Mr. (afterward, Sir Everard) Falkener, from whose house at Wandsworth most of his letters are dated. For Sir Everard, Voltaire always retained the warmest feelings of friendship, and forty years later returned hospitality to his sons.

Pope was one of the persons Voltaire most desired to see. He had already described him as "the most elegant, most correct, and most harmonious poet they ever had in England." On his first visit, Pope could only speak French—like Russell of the *Scotsman* made jokes—with difficulty; and Voltaire could not make himself understood. The result being somewhat unsatisfactory, Voltaire retired to Wandsworth, and did not seek further company until he had fully acquired the language. An anecdote in Chepworth's *History of the Stage* relates that he was in the habit of attend-

ing the theatre with the play in his hand, and that he confessed that by this method he obtained more proficiency in speaking the language in one month than he could otherwise have attained in four or five. Madame de Genlis had the audacity to assert that Voltaire never knew English, yet certain it is he could, before he was many months in this country, both speak and write it with facility. By November 16, 1726, he wrote to Pope, after that poet's accident while driving near Bolingbroke's estate at Dawley. In writing to his friend Thieriot in France, he sometimes used English, for the same reason, he said, that Boileau wrote in Latin, not to be understood by too curious people.

A few lines of verse, otherwise without merit, may show the facility with which he could express himself in our language:—

"Hervey, would you know the passion
You have kindled in my breast?
Trifling is the inclination
That by words can be expressed.
In my silence see the lover;
True love is by silence known;
In my eye you'll best discover
All the power of your own."

While in this country he wrote in English a portion of his tragedy, "Brutus," and two essays, one on the Civil Wars of France, and one on Epic Poetry. In the introduction he expresses his conception of his own position as a man of letters in a foreign country. As these essays, although popular in England at the time, are now extremely rare I transcribe a paragraph or two from them:—

The true aim of a relation is to instruct men, not to gratify their malice. We should be busied chiefly in giving a faithful account of all the useful things and extraordinary persons, whom to know and to imitate, would be a benefit to our country. A traveller who writes in that spirit is a merchant of a nobler kind, who imports into his native country the arts and virtues of other nations.

In his *Essay on Epic Poetry*, Voltaire shows he had made a thorough study of Milton, though his criticism can scarcely be considered an advance upon that of Addison. He displays his constant admiration for Tasso, to whom he was doubtless in part attracted by his sufferings at the hands of an ignoble nobility. He says:—

The taste of the English and of the French, though averse to any machinery grounded upon enchantment, must forgive, nay command that of Armida, since it is the source of so many beauties. Besides, she is a Mahometan, and the Christian religion allows us to believe that those infidels are under the immediate influence of the devil.

I have cited these passages rather to show Voltaire's perfect acquaintance with the English language than for their own merit. But it is not without interest that it was in this essay (p. 104) that the well-known story of Newton and the apple-tree was told for the first time.

Writing of the assertion that Milton took the hint of his *Paradise Lost* from a ridiculous play on the fall of man, he says:—

In the like manner Pythagoras owed the invention of music to the noise of the hammer of a blacksmith. And thus, in our days, Sir Isaac Newton, walking in his garden, had the first thought of his system of gravitation upon seeing an apple fall from a tree.

Mr. Collins, who points out that Voltaire has this credit, and that the story is told on the trustworthy authority of Newton's niece and her husband, John Conduit, Newton's intimate friend, overlooks this passage, and says: "It is not, so far as I can discover, to be found in any publication antecedent to the

Lettres sur les Anglais." But the Essay on Epic Poetry was antecedent to the Letters on the English. The story was told for the first time by Voltaire, but it was told in the English tongue in which he heard it. Perhaps an even more decisive test of his knowledge of English was his familiarity with Butler's *Hudibras*, portions of which he translated.

Voltaire had a great admiration for the comedies of Congreve. But the witty English dramatist held too mean a view of his profession to please his French compeer. In their first conversation, Congreve spoke of his works as trifles beneath him, and begged his guest to consider him not as an author but as a gentleman. Voltaire answered with spirit, "If you had the misfortune to be merely a gentleman I should never have come to see you." It may have been through Congreve that Voltaire became acquainted with the Dowager Duchess of Marlborough, who, says Goldsmith, wished Voltaire to edit her memoirs. At any rate, he utilized her acquaintance, relating in his *Age of Louis XIV.* her story of Queen Anne having had a secret interview with her brother James, whom she offered to designate her successor if he would abjure the Church of Rome.

(To be concluded)

(Reprinted.)

J. M. WHEELER.

Reverend

I WELL remember a gasp of genuine horror which went round a gathering of young men when a minister related to us an ancient and harmless joke, in which he used the expression "damn." The same element of pained surprise marks any such departure from reverence on the part of a reverend.

The term "Rev." in front of a name seems to act as a sort of halo, lending to what is otherwise a very commonplace "Mr. Jones" an air of magic and mystery which lifts him to another plane as the "Rev. Mr. Jones."

Mr. Jones, we suspect, might have been a gay dog in his time. The Rev. Mr. Jones, of course, has always been the model of virtue. If Mr. Jones won't support your Two Spades he's a darn fool. If the Rev. Mr. Jones trumps your ace there must be good reason. Mr. Jones probably sings in his bath. The Rev. Mr. Jones doesn't need a bath.

Let the untutored savage prostrate himself, lift his head to the sky, contort with his arms, and utter weird noises, and we feel inclined to laugh. And the philosopher Hobbes grasped an essential aspect when he said that such laughter comes of a sudden sense of superiority. But let the civilized clergyman behave in the same way and he is received with reverence and rewarded with a stipend. Why the change? It is not the fact that the clergyman is one of our race. The Piccadilly policeman is one of our race, but if he were to emulate the savage and the preacher, the feelings of reverence on our part would be markedly absent. The Reverend functions in an environment peculiarly his. Each individual member of the congregation has become very largely submerged into the mass mentality, which has been created by sacred music, the architectural surroundings, the intonation of the language, and the important factor of tradition. Consequently the parson is able to face, not a number of independent, critical, thinking, reasoning individuals, but a psychological unit, ready to imbibe, not to filter, whatever issues from the pulpit. The congregation have become themselves part of the environment. They have become collectively reverent. By the way, this is not just an Atheist's interpretation. It is recognized by psychologists—even by those

who are not Atheists (e.g., Sir John Adams, in *Everyman's Psychology*).

Psychologists tell us that the state of mind called reverence is a complex one, made up of four elements; wonder, fear, subjection and gratitude. We see how each is necessary. The wonder must be a reaction to the essential mystery of what the parson has to offer. The fear must mark the mystery's importance, its imminence, its danger. The subjection must serve to elevate the preacher and place the audience in a position of dependence. The gratitude is necessary for the £ s. d.

Far be it from me to disparage any playful appellations which may add to the gaiety of life. But if we are to have His Reverence the Bishop, how nice it would be to speak also of His Velocity Mr. Malcolm Bluebird, His Pugnacity Mr. Carnera, His Obesity Mr. Teddy Brown, His Verbosity Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, or, happy thought, His Irreverence Mr.

G. H. TAYLOR.

The Passing of Tradition

WE are often reminded of the exceeding slowness with which some old and clearly demonstrable errors die out. In a weekly column of "Early Science at the Royal Society" (17th century), published a few years ago in *Nature*, the gist of a communication made by a member at one of the meetings was as follows: My maid, having badly injured her hand, suffered much pain; so I prepared a bag of sympathy powder for her to put in her bosom; after a while I had the bag abstracted without the maid's knowledge, when she cried out with pain, and continued to do so until the bag was restored to her. The member who told of this evidently thought that the method of curing injury, or at least of alleviating pain, was genuine. No criticism by other members was mentioned, but one of them said he would repeat the process whenever he found an opportunity.

Of course this was an application of sympathetic magic. Among other methods of application in vogue at the time was the supposed curing of a wound inflicted with a sword by anointing the weapon. Bacon has an interesting reference to this, saying that though it was "commonly received and avouched," he was not inclined to believe it.

At the time mentioned some scientists (probably few) were not quite emancipated from belief in ancient occultry, but most of the believers were clerics, and the densely ignorant mass of the people—probably not less than 95 per cent of whole populations; who received no education. There is less excuse for the clerics, such as Luthier, who said he would have no compassion on witches, but would burn them all, and John Wesley who, some decades after the laws against witchcraft had been repealed in this country, protested against the view of most men of learning of the time (eighteenth century) that accounts of apparitions and witches were "old wives' fables."

Probably one of the chief reasons for the long persistence of such notions is that they do not lend themselves so readily to experiment as natural objects and processes; and the prevailing mode of thought, and more particularly the fact that the Bible takes for granted the reality of apparitions, witchcraft, magicians (as those of Egypt, who "imitated miracles," if they did not work them), and many other such superstitions, deterred competent persons from making experiments on such points, or at all events the systematic and definite ones that they practised in their scientific work.

If the member of the Royal Society who made the communication had put sand, or sugar, or even nothing at all, in the bag (ensuring that its emptiness was concealed, and that the "patient" believed the powder was there) he might easily have proved that the powder had no more to do with the supposed remedy than the flowers of spring, and also that if the maid's faith had not really made her whole, it was entirely responsible for any palliative effect that may have been produced. Here we enter the wide field of medico-psychological inquiry, the action of the mind, including that of the Unconscious, on the body. This constitutes the sole basis of "miraculous cures," "faith healing," from the "temple cures" and "cures in dreams," of the Æsculapians of some twenty-five centuries ago, down to the comparable practices of our own day. This action also explains such interesting little facts as the following (lately mentioned to me by a medical friend at one of the larger London hospitals): A patient is given a soporific injection, which duly sends him to sleep; the solution used is gradually and slowly weakened until nothing but pure water is given; and though the patient will not or cannot get to sleep without the injection, the addition of a little water to his bodily contents—or, rather, the consciousness that he has had, or thinks he has had, something that will make him sleep—causes him to fall asleep as before.

For the perpetuation of a host of ancient errors—creation, the flat earth, astrology, palmistry, etc.—we must hold Christianity mainly responsible, directly on account of its doctrines (including those of the Bible), or indirectly on account of its fixation on Europe of a great mass of ancient superstition, and the consequent attitude of childish credulity, the neglect of and opposition to the scientific work of the Greeks, and the destruction of the Roman system of education. The general result is shown in a well known passage in Lecky's *History of Rationalism*: "Together with a system of Biblical interpretation so stringent, and at the same time so capricious, that it infallibly came into collision with every discovery that was not in accordance with the unaided judgment of the senses, and therefore with the familiar expressions of the Jewish writers, everything was done to cultivate a habit of thought the direct opposite of the habits of science. The constant exaltation of blind faith, the countless miracles, the childish legends, all produced a condition of besotted ignorance, of grovelling and trembling credulity that can scarcely be paralleled except among the most degraded barbarians."

However, mere subservience to tradition is slowly passing. Wells and Huxley, in *The Science of Life*, remind us that "The development of human societies was a development of traditions. Usage, justified by mythology, was the method of human association for scores of centuries. But the different conditions under which our widely diffused species was living in different regions of the world forbade the establishment of any uniform usage and mythology. By wars, raids, and the clash of traditions, the spirit of comparison, disputation, and inquiry was fostered. Undirected thinking gave place here and there in a few minds to a more sceptical, sustained and efficient process." As is well known, the first important break with tradition—with the mere acceptance of current beliefs, ideas and practices—was made by the ancient Greeks, who initiated systematic rational investigation. But, as is equally well known, the movement was brought to an end by the intense revival and subsequent protracted domination of ancient superstition, and in the Western world a new start had to be made some fifteen centuries later.

It may be added that Wells and Huxley deal in particular with the "war tradition," which is bound up with the "sovereign state tradition," and its relation to education. This has been, "until quite recent times, the imparting of tradition, the building up of his systems of association on traditional lines . . . Education was an entirely conservative force; it functioned to preserve the traditional state of affairs. So it is still over large parts of the world. So it is wherever it is under the direction of religious bodies who maintain a view of the universe which they believe to be final. So it is in the completely self-satisfied atmosphere of a typical English public school. But . . . the introduction of scientific work has infected even the most dogmatic centres with a sense of intellectual incompleteness. Instead of 'forming minds' and 'moulding character' to a certain pattern fitted to a definite rôle, and the turning out the completed product to astonish the world, the educational machinery of to-day begins at least to think of its function as a preparation for adventure, experiment and learning that will continue throughout life."

J. REEVES.

"An Invisible Calvary"

BOOKS can be neglected, undervalued, and unfairly censured. Books may be eulogized with ridiculous panegyric, commended in terms which invite odious comparisons. A frog may be "puffed" in the vain hope that the author will hit a bull's eye.

Mr. Alfred Noyes wrote a book called *The Unknown God; Or the Renaissance of Theism*.* We cannot blame the author (or even the publishers) if a host of very ordinary reviewers proclaim a very ordinary book to be worthy the combined genius of a thousand leaders of literature.

The publication of a new edition gives the publishers an opportunity to quote from these laudations. Let us hope the author has too much sense to be taken in by these "blurbs."

According to the *Saturday Review*, "This book is a record of one man's struggle through a stunned and bewildered agnosticism to the embrace of the full Christian conception." The *Church Times* thanks Mr. Noyes on behalf of "the world of Christian thought" (whatever that may be). *Blackfriars* doubts if "all this vital doctrine about God has ever been presented in such worthy English." The *Contemporary Review* "pays a tribute to its remarkable combination of spiritual insight, philosophic competence, logical force and poetic imagination."

The *Tablet* finds that Noyes "frankly and fearlessly faces any and all ghosts . . . and with his quiet eloquence he lays them all." The *Daily Telegraph* wisely closes its adulation by admitting that "Quotation might spoil it." *Cornhill* says that Mr. Noyes "is certainly seeing Herbert Spencer in a new light"—which seems likely enough. The *Manchester Guardian* calls it "A unique book," which indeed it may be.

G.K.'s Weekly sees in Noyes a combination of Jeans, Newman and Browne, and actually finds the book so full of "the note of greatness," that "it is most difficult to indicate its scope," but anyhow "it deals with ultimates," if you know what they are! And the *Record* breaks the record of foolish praise by saying: "Alike in penetrating criticism and constructive power the book is a masterpiece . . . philosopher and poet in one."

All this nonsense is a poor preface to a book of any kind. Such flattery would cause disappointment if it referred to a far better book. Unlike the *Telegraph*, we quote, instead of describing. Let the reader make of it what he may:—

The development of sensitive nerves in the earlier brute creation may be regarded as a necessary preliminary to creatures capable of all the joys and sorrows of the Ninth Symphony. . . . There is no question whatever that there is a consecutive process and that the capacity

for suffering increases as we ascend in the hierarchy of Nature. . . . It is surely possible that these pangs of Nature may be the price that has to be paid for something else, something that could be achieved in no other way, without that self-contradiction which, as the philosophers themselves affirm, is impossible even to Omnipotence.

Considerations of this kind gradually confirmed me in a belief which seemed to me, indefinite though it was, as far as I could go for some years. It amounted simply to this. The Christian philosophy, the Christian scheme, had an essential truth which was somehow independent of its earthly history. It was in accord with eternal realities; and, whether we could go further or not, its "facts" had a higher symbolic value and significance than any other in the history of mankind. They had this value, even if they were taken merely as composing a vast parable, of which we could accept the "heavenly meaning," without necessarily accepting the "earthly story" in all its details. . . . If there had never been a Calvary on earth, there was an invisible Calvary at the very heart of Creation, and an Eternal Passion in the divine depths of the creative Love.

G.B.

* London, Sheed and Ward, 7s. 6d.

THE DEATH OF PHILIP OF SPAIN

The news was quickly carried to Whitehall; it was also carried to the Escorial. King Philip's agony was coming to an end at last. The ravages of his dreadful diseases had overwhelmed him utterly; covered from head to foot with putrefying sores, he lay moribund in indescribable torment. His bed had been lifted into the oratory, so that his dying eyes might rest till the last moment on the high altar in the great church. He was surrounded by monks, priests, prayers, chantings, and holy relics. For fifty days and nights the extraordinary scene went on. He was dying as he had lived—in absolute piety. His conscience was clear: he had always done his duty; he had been infinitely industrious; he had existed solely for virtue and the glory of God. One thought alone troubled him; had he been remiss in the burning of heretics? He had burnt many, no doubt; but he might have burnt more. Was it because of this, perhaps, that he had not been quite as successful as he might have wished? It was certainly mysterious—he could not understand it—there seemed to be something wrong with his Empire—there was never enough money—the Dutch—the Queen of England . . . as he mused, a paper was brought in. It was the despatch from Ireland, announcing the victory of Tyrone. He sank back upon his pillows, radiant; all was well, his prayers and his virtues had been rewarded, and the tide had turned at last. He dictated a letter to Tyrone of congratulation and encouragement. He promised immediate succour, he foretold the destruction of the heretics, and the ruin of the heretic Queen. A fifth Armada . . . he could dictate no more, and sank into a tortured stupor. When he awoke it was night, and there was singing at the altar below him; a sacred candle was lighted and put into his hand, the flame as he clutched it closer and closer, casting lurid shadows upon his face; and so, in ecstasy and in torment, in absurdity and in greatness, happy, miserable, horrible, and holy, King Philip went off, to meet the Trinity.

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