

# THE FREETHINKER

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## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>Ghosts and the B.B.C.—The Editor</i> - - - -	481
<i>The Culture of Carpenter—Mimmermus</i> - . - -	482
<i>Put Back the Clock—T.H.E.</i> - - - -	483
<i>Some Elements of Paganism in Christianity—H. Cutner</i>	485
<i>The Celestial Boss—Ignotus</i> - - - -	486
<i>The 2,983 Saints of Brittany—Bernhard Ragner</i> - -	490
<i>Song for a World of Necrophages—Jack Lindsay</i> -	491
<i>Reason and Violence—Austen Verney</i> - - - -	492

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

## Views and Opinions

### Ghosts and the B.B.C.

I DON'T think I have ever heard of a ghost that either tolerated or enjoyed a joke. The traditional ghost must have a solemn audience and an awe-creating environment. Uninhabited houses, situated in a lonely spot, old castles around which linger the memories of blood-curdling deeds, a number of people sitting solemnly in semi or complete darkness, the singing of doleful hymns in more or less funereal tones and tunes, these things are the traditional "props" for the appearance of uneasy spirits. But let the house be comfortably and brightly furnished, the mortals engaged in light and jocular conversation, the songs sung be something of the humorous, or even of the jazz variety, the talk be quite free and casual, intermingled with a number of genuinely funny stories, let the discussions be on the latest fashions in hats, the probable winner of the next big race, or the conqueror of a forthcoming prize-fight, and ghosts will not appear. The spiritual is so generally the equivalent of the dull that one suspects the dull to be the common equivalent of the spiritual.

This insensibility to the humorous is seen throughout the history of religion. The founders and leaders of religion have nearly all been solemn creatures. If they joked they did so—like the traditional Scotchman, who is very, very rare in Scotland—with difficulty. Their humour was of a very infantile order. The ghost, too, ran true to the religious pattern. He, or she, or it, spoke of things in solemn tones, and if he attempted what was alleged to be humour, it was of the subtle kind that consists in pulling hair, or tweaking noses, or pinching ears. Heaven, we note, has harps but no concertinas. The angels blow trumpets but not saxophones. There is a difficulty in thinking of a spirit blowing a tin whistle or conducting a jazz orchestra. It is terrible to think of what becomes of the great wits, the noted humorists, the lovers of

"good stories," the creators of light music when they enter the "summerland." Let us hope that they suffer nothing worse than annihilation. For them to spend eternity vainly seeking appreciative listeners would be a torture greater than any that entered the mind of Dante.

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### Jokes and Ghosts

*Apropos.* The B.B.C., as is well-known, will tolerate no light or jokeful treatment of religion. Apparently Sir John Reith and his committee of parsons did not think that Spiritualism was a religion, and in one broadcast a "comedian," Mr. George Robey, was permitted to joke about, or sneer at spiritualism. On this the editor of *Psychic News* wrote to Sir John Reith pointing out that Spiritualism was really a religion, and should therefore, presumably be kept as dull as are other religious discourses. Mr. Hannen Swaffer, a gentleman not remarkable for his wit, also complained. In the end the apostles of the deadly dull and of the non-witty, if not of the witless where religion is concerned, won. Sir John Reith climbed down, and in future, artists who receive a contract to broadcast, will be informed that they must "keep their broadcast material free from any mention of religion (including Spiritualism)." The ghosts are taken under the protection of the B.B.C. Comedians may joke about everything else, but they must be deferentially solemn if they refer to religion—"including Spiritualism." The *Psychic News* considers this a great victory. It says it justifies the policy of the paper, and exhorts its readers to "fight on, and fear none"—except those who possess wit, and use it. They must be banned or suppressed.

Now I fully sympathize with the Spiritualists in their claim to have the same rights to the use of the microphone as have the nondescript crowd of Christians who at present rule the roost. If the Spiritualists had by their persistence achieved this equality they would deserve congratulation. But in this direction they have not succeeded. And what they are protesting against is a quite different matter. They ask to be protected against comedians making jokes about them and their "spirit friends." In the name of all that is sensible, why? Comedians must joke about something, and there is little they can use as material unless they make use of something that other people are inclined to take seriously. They joke about husbands and wives, parents and children, politicians and scientists, dukes and dustmen, kings and commoners, young men in love and old men in liquor; they have likened the moon unto green cheese, and poked fun at the British Constitution. Everything in life may be the material for a joke—everything save one thing, religion. Why this exception? The *Psychic News* distinctly claims this differentiation on behalf of Spiritualism because it is a religion, and says that in protecting Spiritualism against the wit of the

comedian, the B.B.C. has admitted it to be such. But this is only converting an absurdity into a principle. Of course a great many people take religion very seriously, but so do many people take other things seriously. I have no doubt that Mr. Ramsay Macdonald took his platitudinous verbiages very very seriously, and could never quite see why he became such a figure of fun to so many people. But even he never dared to ask for protection against comedians. For anyone to say that because he believes very earnestly in certain things, therefore they must not be made the subject of a joke, or a witticism, is wrong on two counts. The first and obvious reply to such an attitude is that while you take such things seriously I do not. The second reply is that if you wish me to assume an attitude of profound respect to beliefs which I think are false, even stupid and harmful, you are then asking me to take up the same attitude towards things which I believe to be false as I assume towards things which I believe to be true. It is not the unbeliever but the religious believer who shows a scant sense of distinction between what is true and what is false. He confuses truth with mere belief; and takes the affirmation of a creed to be the equivalent of a scientific demonstration.

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#### Safeguarding Absurdity

Even then no one is justified in demanding that his belief shall be protected against sarcasm, satire or ridicule. And, as I have said, in subjects other than religion no one does ask for such protection. If Sir John Reith had not been the solemn religious person he is he might have replied to the whine of the *Psychic News*, "the wireless should not be used to sneer at the religious convictions of listeners," with "take care not to have beliefs at which sensible people cannot help sneering." But in this instance it would have been very dangerous to have issued a reply of that kind, for a comparison might have been instituted between the proceedings of a Spiritualist meeting and many of the sermons that are broadcast, particularly that exceedingly comic entertainment which Canon Elliott provides every Thursday evening in the guise of a religious service. If any comedian on the music hall stage can better that, I have yet to hear him.

I think the cause for this strong protest against wit and humour being used against religion, "including Spiritualism," lies deeper than appears at first sight. In the first place, it may be noted that there is much greater freedom when religion is seriously believed in than when as now, to use the words of John Stuart Mill, "the philosophic minds of the world can no longer believe in religion, or can only believe it with modifications amounting to an essential change of its character (a period) of weak convictions, paralysed intellects and growing laxity of principle." Once upon a time Christian and religious feeling generally saw nothing wrong in depicting God Almighty as a whiskered octogenarian, manufacturing the world with a set of mechanic's tools around him. People had a genuine belief in him, and the picture gave no offence. But when men do not really believe, or when their belief is of a very indefinite character, then placing the subject of their belief before them in a realistic manner gives them something of a shock. They are able to see themselves as they really are, stripped of all the various verbal disguises with which they have been fooling themselves and others. Laughter then becomes one of the tests of reality. It has a sanative quality of a very high order.

But wit and humour involve more than this. It implies a quick and lively imagination, an ability to look round a subject, to view it from many and new angles, and to relate it to aspects of life which by the duller-witted ones are not even suspected. To take

an example just given. The medieval religionist found nothing suggesting humour in the picture of an elderly gentleman creating the world as a builder sets about making a house, because religion was to him something concrete and actual. But when, as Mill says, religion has become transformed so as no longer to mean what it did mean, in other words, when it has practically ceased to exist, the presentation of the thing as it was, the placing of the old belief in a modern setting divorced from traditional language and mental attitude, produces something in the nature of the grotesque. Humour applied to religion then becomes a challenge to contrast belief with reality, and no religion can submit to this in a modern environment and live.

I am not, therefore, surprised at the *Psychic News* being anxious to see Spiritualism placed within the category of religion. That word alone is still heavily charged with a narcotic quality. It tends to numb intelligence and to stifle criticism. If Spiritualism is to live it must become a religion, and Spiritualists are wise in guarding against the free play of wit and humour. When the spirits of the world's great wits turn up in the seance room they are as void of sparkle as yesterday's opened bottle of champagne. Humourists lose their wit and philosophers mislay their wisdom. Spinoza talks like Mr. Joad, George Eliot like Marie Corelli, Paine forgets his precise and nervous English and rambles on like a Christian Evidence lecturer, Ingersoll "discourses" with never a sparkle of wit or a single epigram, and Bradlaugh orates like a third-rate Nonconformist preacher. Were I a Spiritualist I should strongly protest against anyone making our "spirit friends" the subject of their wit. The seance room is the last place in the world that should be used as a theatre for the lively imagination of the poet, or for that quick perception of the incongruous which is one of the chief elements of humour. I really believe that in the decision of Sir John Reith graciously to recognize Spiritualism as a religion, he has done our spirit-hunting friends a service. If ghosts had a real sense of humour they would long ago have laughed themselves out of existence.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

### The Culture of Carpenter

"To bear all naked truths,  
And to envisage circumstance, all calm;  
That is the top of sovereignty."—Keats.

"The task of the twentieth century is to discipline the chaotic activity of the nineteenth century."

Frederic Harrison.

CRITICS profess to regard Edward Carpenter as a mere echo of Walt Whitman. It is true that he entered the literary arena behind the great American writer, but the differences between the two men are very striking. Whitman was reared in a young republic, and Carpenter in an old monarchy. The American served with the army in a long and terrible war, and the Englishman spent years as a priest. Whitman's psychological roots were in the United States, and Carpenter's in the English West Country. The author of *Leaves of Grass* was an entirely self-educated man, and the writer of *England's Ideal* was a brilliant University scholar, full of European culture. Whitman was no great traveller, but Carpenter had visited the principal countries of the world. As we look closely at these two men, we realize more clearly their moral and intellectual differences.

It was the publication of *Towards Democracy* which placed Edward Carpenter definitely among the forces of progress. It was the voice of a new era. Young

and enthusiastic men treasured the volume, and older men looked eagerly for other works from the same wise pen. Carpenter was then in the very prime of life. In the autumn of his days came *Love's Coming of Age*, and *My Days and Dreams*, two books whose significance in modern literature and thought is remarkable.

Born at Brighton, of middle-class parents of ample means, Carpenter was educated at Cambridge University, becoming a Wrangler and Fellow of his college. At first he was attracted by the mummeries of the Established Church, and took orders under the famous Frederick Denison Maurice, the friend of Tennyson, who gained publicity by boldly challenging the centuries'-old dogma of hell-fire and eternal damnation. Broadminded as he undoubtedly was, even he could not keep Carpenter in the ecclesiastical fold. For the young priest was reading other things than the *Prayer Book* and the *Lives of the Saints*. He was absorbing Shelley's passionate lyrics of Liberty, and soon he was to become an ardent admirer of Walt Whitman. In such company the young priest was bound to look beyond the very narrow confines of the Established Church and the moment, and to scan far horizons and the unalterable stars.

It was only a question of time. Such a fine character as Carpenter's was bound, sooner or later, to rebel at being "cribb'd, cabin'd, and confin'd" within a spiritual despotism which has ever regarded all forms of progress with jealous eyes. The horrors of slavery, the brutal treatment of prisoners, the employment of little children, and other relics of the bad old times, were never denounced by Christian priests until ordinary men and women cried shame upon them. This is not a matter of opinion, but a question of fact. The records of Hansard's "Parliamentary Debates" show that the bishops of the Established Church almost invariably voted against reforms. They voted against the Bill for abolishing the death-penalty for stealing property of the value of five shillings. The Roman Catholic Disabilities and the Jewish Disabilities Repeal Bills met with their determined opposition. They resisted the motion for the admission of Nonconformists to the Universities, and also the rights of Dissenters to bury their own dead in their own manner. Owing to the mule-like obstinacy of this Church of England's bishops the United Kingdom remained for very many years the one civilized state where marriage with a deceased wife's sister was illegal, and Britons were long refused the same freedom as their own kinsmen across the seas. Indeed, what sixteen centuries of the rule of Christian bishops had done for the people of England was to leave them in the grip of barbarism and feudalism.

Carpenter abandoned this Church, and became a University Extension lecturer, and wrote his Democratic books. "If I am not level with the lowest, I am nothing," he wrote humbly and sincerely. Nor was it an idle boast, for he actually gave away the greater part of the fortune he had inherited from his father. During the succeeding thirty years he was one of the people. He worked with labourers, mechanics, and other toilers, and took to open-air speaking, a trying and a thankless task for a cultured and sensitive man. He even tried to make a living out of his garden, and carried his produce to market and stood beside his stall to sell it. He made sandals, and, in the scant intervals of a busy career he wrote beautiful books which will keep his memory green for many a day.

Carpenter's real and lasting influence is in his books, for he was a pioneer amongst pioneers, and the advocate of many freedoms. He was so far ahead of the stereotyped times in which he lived that he was quite outside the region of extensive popularity, and his

truly amazing power of detachment from his own age was only saved from disaster by his whole-hearted faith in the great future of humanity, which he inherited from Shelley, Whitman, and the great French Free-thinkers.

Humanitarian, idealist, dreamer, if you will, the life of Carpenter commands respect. His ideals were always noble. He believed that when men and women were equally free to follow their best impulses; where idleness and vicious luxury on the one hand, and oppressive labour and the fear of starvation on the other, are alike unknown; when the standard of opinion is set by the wisest and best among us, then Democracy will come into its heritage.

Carpenter travelled much, but his greatest and most notable journey was from the time when, as a young man, he acted as priest to an out-worn superstition, until he finally emerged as the austere apostle of Democracy. We can but admire the high standard of his conduct, and the unselfishness of his long life. His career was so rare as to be scarcely credible. In an age of cowardly compromise Edward Carpenter remained ever faithful to his principles; in an age of hypocrisy he cared only for truth. His amazing career is a discourse on the indispensability of reformers, who, more even than the poets, are "the unacknowledged legislators of mankind."

MIMNERMUS.

## Put Back the Clock

MANY there are who look back yearningly to the Ages of Faith. Disrespectful hands have, alas, been laid on the Ark of the Lord, and although the Lord himself has been much more indifferent to the sacrilege than he would have been once upon a time, yet the Lord's disciples are showing signs of being up and doing. Pulpit and Press (A pretty pair!) are plugging the slogans that Materialism is once more utterly discredited and that there are signs of a Blessed Revival of Faith. The devout are accordingly raising their heads; pious jackanapes are abusing their betters; visionaries and mystics are raising their feet from the filthy earth and trying their wings in vacuo. No beauty can be discerned by them in the patient accumulation of facts and the careful generalization. Nothing but contempt do they express for those who have an unpractical love for truth and correct thinking. These be pinchbeck virtues, if indeed they be virtues at all. Heroism, Loyalty, and Romance cannot belong to a time which is interesting itself in such earthly things as the minimum wage, the ending of War, the stabilization of Love, the minimizing of pain. Rapturous Randolph and Soulful Sadie see that their proper setting is in the Ages which yielded such spiritual fruit as the Inquisition, the Burnings of Witches, the Black Death, the cry of No Faith with Heretics, and the pleasantly persuasive policies of rivalling Christian sects.

Symptomatic indeed is a book recently published entitled *Supernatural* (by Edward Langton, B.D., published by Rider). It deals with the universal belief in Angels and Devils in Christendom in the Middle Ages. As for the period just previous to this, the author assures us "The evidence is seen to be conclusive that Jesus and all the leading figures of the early Church were very convinced believers in the existence and activity of good and evil spirits. They held that spirit operations count for much in the life of mankind." He hesitates, however, to say, "So much the worse for them." Although he sees very plainly that the belief in angels and devils, demoniac possession, witches and magic, is woven into the Christian fabric,

he thinks that this part of the Message for All Mankind could be cut out by competent operatives without in any way damaging the roll. This opinion we share with Mr. Langton. Christianity is like the widow's cruise—its powers of accommodation are limitless. But why, says Mr. Langton wisely, go in for another bit of invisible mending when it may not be necessary? What about Wallace and Crookes, he says, and the Society for Psychical Research? Mr. Langton finds himself in no quandary, whatever happens. He is quite prepared simply to give us the facts and leave it there, at least for the present. The game is afoot, and let it take what course it will, he will be found comfortably reclining on the Rock of Ages.

Mr. Langton is impressed by the evidence for all his Phenomena. He is impressed by the evidence for witchcraft, and if the kind of testimony he has been raking together will prove anything, he has every right to be impressed. Some of these days he will sit down and apply himself to the question of what is the evidential value of human testimony of this kind. He will be driven into it, for he will find that there is nothing in his gallery of wonders that he can well reject.

We are aware that Mr. Langton's shyness in coming to a definite conclusion one way or the other can be construed into an admirable suspension of judgment on a dark and difficult theme. We hope we are not unkind in suggesting that the author will be thoroughly well satisfied with the outcome of his book if he has managed to strengthen the impression that there is much more in angels and devils and exorcism and witches and levitation than this unbelieving generation dreams of. If the early Fathers believed in all these things, if, in Ingersoll's phrase, these gentlemen "received as a waste-paper basket receives," well didn't the great Lord Bacon believe in witches? If Sir Oliver Lodge believes in Spirits, can we not be lenient with Luther for throwing an inkpot at the Devil? If Russell Wallace was amiably receptive why find fault with John Wesley? On our part we do not find fault with John Wesley altogether. We can even admire his intellectual integrity when he said that he would "fight to the last breath against giving up to infidels one great proof of the invisible world, that of witchcraft and apparitions, confirmed by the testimony of all ages." We can, to be plain, admire this attitude more than we can that of Mr. Langton. Jesus, of course, needs no excuse at all. If we had enjoyed the experience of being lifted up to the top of Snowdon by the Devil, and shown all the wonders of the world, including the Cricket Ground at Sydney, after that, we feel we should be on the side of Russell Wallace and every one of his modern miracles, and that with a certain amount of enthusiasm.

We cannot quite understand Mr. Langton's reluctance to stand up valiantly for Jesus. There are at the moment so many who would have welcomed this attitude, that it would not have been very heroic. Those who are hoping for another reign of tyranny are undoubtedly anxious for a recurrence of the symptoms of the Ages of Faith. Mr. Langton should have stood up stoutly for the Faith once delivered to the Saints prior to the Invisible Mendings, and he would have been received, we are sure, with quite a substantial amount of friendliness. We do not suggest that he should have allied himself with that figure of Jesus in cloth cap and overalls so very much in demand just now, but a really theatrical Jesus. The Jesus who cast out devils and believed in guardian angels; the Jesus who could find money when he wished it, in a fish's mouth; the Jesus who could wither a fig-tree with an expletive. Mr. Langton has missed his chance.

It is easy, in reply to Mr. Langton, to assert that Superstition is dead, and that all the King's Horses and all the King's Men cannot put Humpty Dumpty together again. Professor Kingdon Clifford was wiser. He warned the Freethinkers of his day that Christianity had destroyed two civilizations and very easily might another. He was far from believing that mankind saw the light so clearly that there was no fear of wholesale reversion to the darkness of ignorance. Clifford was one of the few men of science of that day who did not underrate the strength of the enemy. He knew the value of militant Freethought and Free Speech, and knew that the battle for these was, in Meredith's phrase, "the best of causes."

Mr. Langton's monstrous regiment of beliefs is on the wane, because the phenomena they were supposed to explain are explainable in less fantastic ways. Disease nowadays is accepted as natural, and possession by the Devil is therefore an unnecessary hypothesis. Where diagnosis and prognosis are possible, there is little room for satanic whims. A tendency to sleep in Church is now regarded as a natural and understandable thing, and therefore there is no need to have recourse to the theory that a wicked devil is trying to force down the eyebrows of the devout. Peculiarity of feature or habit is understood to be a legacy from one's forbears, so the belief in witchcraft becomes gratuitous. This habit of restricting the realm of the supernatural is found to be ever justified by experience. John Smith has an empirical belief in the power of a pill and the value of a kindly plaster. He rejects the more esoteric mixture of water, salt and abracadabra, known as Holy Water. He will only resort to prayer when he finds his doctor puzzled and his pain intolerable.

Mr. Langton promises at one point of his book to deal with the practical values of these beliefs, but one may search all day to find them, and when they are found they are not worth the search. What we can see happening in days to come, should mental fastidiousness be relaxed, is a return to the habit of getting mental relief by hurling inkpots, and to the intellectual pleasure which the specially godly felt in discussing such points as to how many angels could congregate on the point of a needle, or if it were possible for an angel to be in two places at the same time. Those Grand Old Days when the true believer had a flair for heresy, and a conviction that he had found the lucky formula, and that he had the divine right to flay or burn those unlucky enough to have imbibed a contrary opinion. The Glorious Old Days when no person's life was safe if possessed of a hare lip or an extra nipple, and when devils were as numerous as bacteria, and in the form of flies, frogs, crows or lice were ever ready to pop into the open mouth—not, mind you, because you were a Laodicean, but because you were particularly pious. The Magnificent Old Days, when the dear Bishop attacked by "simply phenomenal rumblings abdominal," instead of looking in at the chemist, bellowed out a *Benedicite*. The days when the poor man, short of food for his wife and weans, prayed and prayed and prayed again, and derived much subjective comfort. Great Days indeed!

Mr. Langton would say that he would exercise a wise eclecticism in his angelology and demonology. Of course! What Mr. Langton will eventually accept, if he carries this investigation further, will be an irrefragable collection of amiable, helpful, and sweet smelling angels. We doubt if the evidence will be found good enough to admit even one of the unpleasant elements. He may plead he will be strictly scientific, and reason alone will be his guide. It is not being impolite to him to suggest that it is more than likely that the process will be beyond his skill.

His liking for Great Names and his faith in much reiterated human testimony will mislead him. The steed he is trusting to will not, we surmise, convey him to the New Jerusalem. It is more likely to take him to the scene of the Witches' Sabbath, where he has every chance of meeting Old Nick himself, in the guise of a goat, a pig, or a dog, casting a lawless eye on the girl with the squint.

T.H.E.

## Some Elements of Paganism in Christianity

### V.

The Cross is the symbol of Christianity. It is known and venerated wherever that religion has been carried. It is in or on every Christian Church, and in the form of a crucifix is worn or adored all over the world by Christians. Most of them believe that their god Jesus Christ was crucified upon a cross; and because of that, the cross is thought to be the great and universal symbol of true religion.

It is true, of course, that the cross has inspired wonderful devotion and astounding fanaticism. Millions of worshippers have turned to it for help, almost believing that the particular cross or crucifix they were addressing was alive and could hear the supplication. Thousands of nuns and priests wear crosses or crucifixes with greater pride than an old soldier does his medals. Hundreds of thousands of graves have crosses as their monuments. The sign of the cross is performed times out of number every day all over the world. No other religion has ever had such devotion paid to a symbol as Christian devotees pay to the Cross. Yet no symbol in the world is more thoroughly pagan.

The facts are too apparent and cannot be gainsaid except by an ignorant Salvation Army captain or a Christian Evidence lecturer. The cross has been found in all parts of the world, used as some kind of a symbol long before Christianity was thought of. The Rev. S. Baring-Gould admits that "it formed part of the primal religion traces of which exist over the whole world, among every people," though, as a good Christian minister, he qualifies this by pointing out it was "a part of the ancient faith which taught men to believe in the Trinity, etc." He claims that "it was more than a coincidence that Osiris by the cross should give life eternal to the spirits of the just"; though why it should be more than a coincidence he does not stop to explain. Mr. Baring-Gould had to admit that the cross in the form of the *crux ansata* is found pictured on scores of Egyptian monuments and gravestones. It is in fact one of the commonest of Egyptian symbols. Its form is a sort of oval on top of a T; and whether it is used as the symbol for giving life, or whether, as is maintained by many authorities, it is a phallic symbol, does not really matter.

What is its origin? Perhaps one of the earliest of all symbols was the oval or circle (often symbolized by the serpent swallowing its tail.) It meant—or is said to mean—the Beginning of the End, the First and the Last. It was probably the emblem of the Universal Mother, containing within itself the All. The figure 1 is the male symbol, and with the bar on top forms the Tau (which is the initial of the word Tammuz). With the oval or circle on top of this T we get the symbol of Creative Life as used by Osiris. Certain it is that our number 10—reckoned to be a "perfect" number—consists of the male and female symbols. And as it is also the number given to the Hebrew letter

Yod, from which all the Hebrew letters are formed, that must be a "perfect" letter too.

But one of the symbols is the cross within the circle, and this is found on many ancient Gaulic coins. It is also used purely as an ornamentation. Baring-Gould thinks that the cross with the Gauls was "a sign of gods connected with water in other religions"; and that the shamrock among the Irish derives its sacredness because it looks a little like a cross. Thus crosses of all kinds and shapes have been discovered. Some are like the well-known Swastika; and as Bishop Colenso remarks, "there is not one amongst them which may not be traced to the remotest antiquity." It is found all over India—one example being in the picture of Agni, the Hindu type of Christ. Agni was called the "Light of the World," which is not surprising, as he was the Hindu god of fire. It should be added, however, that Agni's cross looks like a Swastika, and it used to be marked on the foreheads of young Buddhists and Brahmins. Schliemann found the same sign on terra-cotta disks at Troy, dating two to three thousand years before Christ. The Swastika is probably the oldest form of the cross, and is certainly not in any way Jewish. Perhaps that is one reason why it is now symbolizing the Nazi terror.

Most of the Hindu deities have a cross of some sort as part of their symbols, and it is an object of veneration for the Buddhists. The Lama of Thibet and his followers adore a cross wonderfully like the Christian one, as has been remarked by many Christian travellers.

It is also interesting to note that when a temple of Serapis in Alexandria was demolished, "there were found sculptured on the stones certain characters resembling the sign of the cross." The worshippers of Serapis were considered Christians by the Emperor Hadrian, and Robert Taylor gives in the *Diogenes* an illuminating extract from the fifth century ecclesiastical historian Sozomenes, which shows how the cross was venerated by them. Both the Greeks and the Romans also venerated the cross.

Baring-Gould illustrates some of these in his book *Curious Myths of the Middle Ages*, and he points out how like a "Calvary" cross is the one in Thessaly. "Long before the Romans," he adds, "long before the Etruscans, there lived in the plains of Northern Italy a people to whom the cross was a religious symbol; a people of whom history tells nothing, knowing not their name; but of whom antiquarian research has learned . . . that they trusted in the cross to guard, and maybe to revive, their loved ones committed to the dust."

The cross was found in the ruins of Pompeii; and also among the Scandinavians. The hammer of the god Thor was in the shape of a cross. It was also in use among the Laplanders and the ancient Druids.

The cross was certainly in use among the American Indians before the first Spanish missionaries set foot in America. It was found in the great temple of Cozamel, and is still preserved on bas-reliefs in the ruined city of Palenque, which is in the heart of Central America. Baring-Gould admits that this cross is "a heathen representation." Moreover, crosses have been found in the cave of Mixteca Baja, in the ruins on the isle of Laputero, in Lake Nicaragua, and on the isle of St. Ulla. Crosses were also revered in Paraguay and Peru among the Incas. The Toltecs claimed it was Quetzalcoatl—the virgin-born and crucified saviour—who introduced the cross as the "Tree of Life." Lord Kingsborough, whose *Mexican Antiquities* is a standard work, claimed the cross for Mexico, Peru and Yucatan, and said it was used also on the banner of Montezuma.

I could go on multiplying instances, but enough has been said to show, at least as far as authorities go,

that the Christian Cross was centuries old before being used by the Christians. And it should not be hastily assumed that even Christians used the cross as a symbol immediately after the supposed death of Christ. For one thing, what was it that was used by the Romans to crucify criminals upon? There can be little doubt that, whatever it was, it was not in the form of the cross used in a crucifix. It was called the *Stauros*, and death by the *stauros* "included," says J. D. Parsons in his interesting and informative work *The Non-Christian Cross*, "transfixion by a pointed *stauros* or stake as well as affixion to an unpointed *stauros* or stake." There is no evidence that there was the cross-bar shown in the case of the cross of Jesus. Many details can be found of the different kinds of stakes used by the ancients for "crucifixion," pointed ones which pierced the body, and unpointed ones upon which the unfortunate victim was tied or nailed, and allowed slowly to die an agonizing death. This mode of death may be the one referred to by Peter when he said Jesus was *hanged* upon a *tree*. "Hanging" here does not necessarily mean hanging by the neck. Parsons claims also that the Greek words translated by "crucify" never mean what we mean by "crucify," but only "fixing upon" or "impaling"; and that "we have in our zeal almost manufactured evidence in favour of the theory that *our* cross or crosses had its or their origin in the shape of the instrument of execution to which Jesus was affixed."

In his work on *The Cross*, Mr. M. Brock gives a picture of the impalement of an Assyrian, from the collection in the British Museum—a man forced on the top of a pointed stake fixed in the ground, his weight causing him to be transfixed. There is another illustration which is even more ghastly; and another on which a man is simply affixed to the stake. In other words, there is no evidence that the "cross" used for crucifixions was like the cross upon which Jesus is supposed to have been crucified. And if it can be proved that this cross is an ancient symbol—and I claim it has easily been proved—and that such a cross was never used for "crucifixion," can we not go a little further, and claim also there never was the crucifixion of Jesus? That the trial and death of a living Jesus never took place at all, but were manufactured? I think so.

H. CUTNER.

## The Celestial Boss

WHO NEVER BOSSES!

THE luckiest employee in the world is the clever parson with a charming manner and a good gift of the gab. For he is in reality employer and employee in one. He is indeed a privileged and happy individual who enjoys a sure job with adequate remuneration—whether he does any work or not. Anyway, even when he does "work" it is work of his own pleasure or designing. His master never interferes, or dictates, or prescribes any task for him. He is under no office, workshop or factory regulations. He has no set hours of labour. He does what he chooses, and holidays when he feels like it. The lay managers of his congregation bow to whatever fiat he likes to issue. He is in fact a little tin god, who rules the lay colleagues in the particular corner of the Lord's vineyard in which he is placed by the laying on of hands of his black-coated brethren.

There is no closer or more arrogant and conceited corporation than the Clerical Trade Union of the Christian Churches. And it is to be noted that it has succeeded in making clericalism fashionable in mostly all professedly Christian communities. Those were the days—say sixty years since—when bodies of Baptists and Methodists conducted their affairs and their services and worship without any clerical assistance. But the intrusiveness of the

clerical element was not to be stayed. The female members of such communions in particular were keen to be in the fashion, and threw their weight in favour of an "ordained clergy" to supersede the lay brethren who had been in the habit of conducting the services. Probably the Quakers are the only religious body now not clerically controlled. After all is said, social emulation is a powerful thing even unto this day; and the wives of successful laymen in Nonconformist bodies were determined to be upsides with their sisters connected with the Established Church. So the robed parson became the leader of communions which had previously been opposed to clerical control. It reminds one of the "Bells of Rothsay," described by the late Rev. David Macrae, who was ejected from the Scottish U.P. Church because he published his disbelief in Eternal Punishment. Mr. Macrae said the bell of the Establishment deeply, slowly and sonorously tolled forth "A-U-I-D K-I-R-K, A-U-I-D K-I-R-K." The Free Kirk bell was more sprightly and confidently asserted in quick measure: "We are *the* True Church." To this the U. P. Bell countered with "No, Ye're No. No, Ye're No." And away up the hill from a remote corner came the high and merry jingle of the Baptist Bell: "We've gotten a bell tae! We've gotten a bell tae!" And once the bell was installed a "reverend" President was not long in being installed also. Supernaturalism cannot continue to exist without accessories and ecclesiastical paraphernalia. Granted the general acceptance of belief in a supernatural Creator and Ruler of the Universe who cannot be seen or heard, there must of necessity be special human deputies to speak for him and explain him and publish his intentions and desires and commands. So man has not only made God, but he has also made and generously maintained a large body of priests and parsons who claim to represent him on earth, and to be working to carry out his will among mankind.

But take away the accessories and paraphernalia of religion, and the supernatural appeal to human beings loses most of its effect. Thus we have stately edifices as Houses of God; incense, sacred music rendered on great organs, a variety of robes, stained glass windows, the odour of sanctity; the reverential air, the dim religious light, weird chanting and intoning of passages from the Christians' sacred books, crucifixes, altars with elaborate mosaic, and fine cloth work emblazoned with "I.H.S."; bowings, crossings and genuflections; and all the cringing and cowering attitudinizations of the abject and abased worshippers of their particular Joss, who is the only reason for the continued existence of this parasitical crowd of modern spiritual medicine-men and witch doctors, who have made it their chief concern to stifle independent thought on the part of anyone who questioned their pretensions, and to poison or cripple the minds of the young. When the people as a whole throw off the yoke of a mythical tyranny these particular Othellos' occupation will be gone. And what will they do then, Oh? There is little scope for them in any useful occupation. Will they saw wood or chop sticks or become porters or what? Shall we see them as sorry mendicants of the gutter, or dispensers of quack medicines in the town squares? Perhaps some of them will resort to fortunetelling—even to the kind that comes within the inspection of the Law of the Land. How they will bewail the fact that the people will no longer have their fortunes told from the pulpit or in the confessional! Meantime, they can, as they contemplate the continued prevalence of human ignorance and fear of the hereafter console themselves with the reflection that a great deal of water will run under the bridges before that time—so undesirable to them, but, ah, how desirable for humanity—can arrive!

Now, it is all right so long as parsons can keep and carry on their jobs without any interference from or risk of sacking by their master in Heaven. But it is all wrong for them if *the community* decides to dispense with their services and gives them their *congé*. That is the snag of being appointed and employed by a boss who is impalpable; who is never seen or heard. When your job as parson goes you can't get at him! You can't find any means of recourse against him for wrongful dismissal. But after all the general body of priests and parsons are not always such innocents as they look; or at any rate they have

astute clerically-minded laymen whom they can afford to pay to organize a mundane scheme of pensions or super-annuation allowance composed of ordinary, worldly, earthly filthy lucre—otherwise known as money or cash. Allow the Lodger? So assured for the future, he can put his fingers to his nose towards the dislodger! But the latter will be glad of the bargain even at some sacrifice, and reflect that he has at any rate effected a "good ridance of bad rubbish."

Freethinkers may at times overlook the buttressing that ecclesiasticism receives from clerically-minded laymen. But, of course, these are the mainstay of the clergy wherever a clergy is to be found, and that is mostly everywhere. We have only to consider the responses to appeals for new Church Building schemes to realize what a grip the myths of Christian belief still have on very many wealthy laymen. This is a "wisecrack" that should be marked and digested by wealthy rationalists. Isn't it depressing to think that Freethought propagandists should be faced with such stupendous tasks with such—comparatively—small backing?

IGNOTUS.

## Acid Drops

Unless the pressure of world opinion proves itself stronger than it appears to be at present, it looks as though war between Abyssinia and Italy is certain. Mussolini laid his plans for this war well over a year ago, and once that design was formed it was not difficult to find frontier incidents in justification. Mussolini says he must have room for the growing population of Italy, and urges Italian women to have as many babies as possible so that Italy may have a still larger population. He is, after all, playing the same game that the other nations have played, our own included. The trouble is that he is commencing late in the day, and when those who have acquired as much as they can handle think it is time that everyone else turned over a new and a better leaf.

Abyssinia is to come under Italian control because it still countenances slavery, and because it is uncivilized. But Abyssinia is one of the oldest of Christian nations; and impartial observers in Abyssinia agree that the greatest obstacle to the abolition of slavery is the influence of the Bible and of the Christian priesthood. The fact is worth remembering for the benefit of those who are so fond of arguing that the modern world owes its culture to the influence of the Christian Church. We have before us a picture of how much civilization a nation may acquire if it is left to the Bible and to Christian influences alone.

It will be noted that Mussolini declines to submit the whole case of Abyssinia to the judgment of the League of Nations, because it is absurd to think that a "Great Power" such as Italy could submit to it. But we imagine that had the cases been reversed, had Italy been as destitute of modern instruments of destruction as is Abyssinia, he would have clamoured for such intervention. Some of our papers are giving some support to this contention. But the whole conception of justice depends upon the recognition of exactly that equality which this Italian gangster repudiates. In a court of law, where genuine justice obtains, the crossing-sweeper has the same rights as the Duke. It is precisely in placing all men on the same level that justice consists. We have often said that the only condition on which the Christian nations of the world recognize a nation to be "great" is the power to wage war and destruction. It is upon this ground that Japan was granted the status of a great power, it was upon this ground that the brutalized and brutalizing rulers of Germany are granted an equality with other "Great Powers." Really there is a lot to learn from the quarrel between Italy and Abyssinia—if people only have enough intelligence to take advantage of the opportunity.

In the event of war with Abyssinia the Pope will follow the example of our own clergy when this country goes to war. He will follow the lead given by Mussolini, who is following the lead given by this country in declaring, that the main aim of the war is the furthering of civilization. The Pope says, with regard to Italy's action in Abyssinia:—

We have every faith that nothing will take place that is not in accordance with truth, justice and charity.

Nothing ever does—that is so far as the country that is speaking is concerned. It is always the other fellow that ignores the claims of "truth, justice and charity."

A slightly different view is taken by "a Vatican authority" to the *Daily Express* correspondent. This Vatican official says:—

It is evident that when Italian culture and civilization are firmly established in Abyssinia, Catholicism will have a better opportunity to flourish.

The establishment of Italian culture and civilization, as Mussolini understands it, may involve an increased use of castor oil, and the acquisition of a few more islands for the reception of political prisoners, but Roman Catholicism may flourish—so long as it does not offend Mussolini.

The Dean of Chichester sees in the coming conflict, not so much the massacre of young Italians and poor Abyssinians as "two Christian nations fighting one another in the midst of the heathen population inflicting grave injury to the whole cause of Christian missions." Men, women and children may be slaughtered; women may become widows, children fatherless, the whole horror of war-suffering may be piled up, but the real injury is to "Christian Missions." As for the Archbishop of Canterbury, he sees "no consolation" in a highly modern mechanized army fighting "a poor and primitive" people. And these men are leaders and spokesmen for the nation!

As for Christianity stopping "war"—has it stopped, for example, the "regrettable" attacks by Orangemen on Catholics, and the "reprisals" by Catholics on Protestants in South Ireland? Christians outside Ireland look with disgust at this display of savage intolerance, but is it not fundamental to religion? Has Christianity ever been free from dissension in its own ranks? And is not what has happened in Ireland exactly what has always happened while Christian nations were religious? Tolerance has grown only with Freethought—with Secularism. They have *civilized* Christianity.

And talking about Ireland, Mr. W. S. Armour, a "half"-Ulsterman, has written a book about Ulster, entitled *Facing the Irish Question*. According to a reviewer, it has always been admitted that Ulster Roman Catholics had a grievance; but Mr. Armour insists that the Ulster Protestantism is in the same boat, "that it is destitute of freedom, and is bound down by the dead hand of Protestant ascendancy," and that the Ulster people "are forced by the Government to play the part, not of self-governing citizens, but of a garrison in a hostile country"; and that "Protestantism in Ireland is far more intolerant than Roman Catholicism." There are plenty of other things happening in Ulster which make one uncomfortable, and which prove once again the baneful influence of religion. For it is religion which more than anything else seems to make decent people "savages"—and perhaps more in Ireland than in any other part of the Empire.

We have had the Government rehearsal of an air-raid, and that is at least another step to accustom the public mind to the idea that war in the near future is inevitable, and so make the general scare policy all the easier. So far as can be gathered the talk of defence is all moonshine. A fair percentage of the "raiders" got through, and a large part of London appears to have been officially destroyed. Defence being impossible, the *Evening News* repeats the brilliant stupidity that "no enemy will come a-bombing if he knows that for every bomb he drops on

our towns two will be dropped on his." So the ideal state for which each Government must strive is to be able to drop two bombs on the other fellow every time the other fellow drops one on him, and, presumably, the other fellow will give notice what he is about to do, so that the two bombs are ready for dropping when he has dropped his one.

Much of this talk of cities being wiped out by poison gas is sheer propaganda. The *Official History of the War* points out that in the case of Armentières, which was for two days subjected to a heavy barrage of mustard gas shells in July, 1918, the deaths numbered only twelve per cent of the population. And in this case the civilians had no gas masks. Some thousands of tons of poison gas would be needed to cover the whole of one of our large centres of population. But the Government has its own methods of propaganda, and trusts to the public being too thoughtless to remember the way in which the war-propaganda of 1914-18 was conducted.

The National Council of Free Churches threatens to take a more direct part in political life than it has done up to now. We say more direct because the Churches, Established and Nonconformist, have always played a part in political life, and always for the purpose of serving sectarian end. What the new move means is that the work will be more open than it has been, and avowed social ends will be pursued in such a manner as to promote sectarian interests. One may be quite certain that with a religious political party in the field, and the readiness of all political parties to buy support by either negative or positive purchase, Freethinkers will have to be very wide-awake if they are to check religious influence and privilege in social life.

It should not be forgotten that it was this union of religion and politics that was very largely responsible for the passing of the prohibition law in America. This did more than anything else of recent years to corrupt American social and political life. It raised gangsterism to the position of a governing power, it sapped the political life of the people, and it never decreased drunkenness. Prohibition worked only for evil, and while the evil effects of an avowedly political religious party may not be of the same order here as in America, in general the consequences are likely to be of the same character. The "Council of Action" will need watching.

Here is an example of political action on the part of the Churches. Irlam (Lancashire) has been permitting children to take their first lesson in dissipation by playing on the swings and in the bathing pools on Sunday. On July 24 the Council, by eight votes to four, decided to stop this desecration of the Sabbath. One of the members, a Mr. J. Cooke, said that the Council ought not to set up counter attractions to the Sunday Schools, and the Methodist circuit quarterly meeting urged the Council to safeguard the Sabbath. What these people are concerned with is, first to see that children are bred to go to chapel or to church, and second to gratify their own stupid bigotry. There are few more contemptible things than this sacrifice of the harmless pleasures of innocent children to satisfy the professional interests of ministers and the stupid superstition of laymen.

A Christian correspondent sends us a very long letter, the sum of which is that if we will only approach the Gospels with the mind of a little child all our difficulties with regard to it will disappear. Agreed. It is our firm conviction that if anyone wishes to believe in the Christian story he must approach it with the mind of a child, and even then it must be a child that has not been subjected to any influences that run counter to Christianity.

But we suggest to our correspondent that the important question is not the number of people who have retained their faith in Christianity because they have also retained the mind of a child, but the number who after receiving Christianity while they were in the child-like stage have rejected it when they reached maturity. It is not really

the number of people that can get on with Christianity that calls for explanation, but the growing number who can get on without it.

Provost John Murray has been getting into trouble with the Free Presbyterian Church at Dornoch. It appears that last Christmas the Provost, who is also one of the leaders of the Church gave a dance, to which about twenty-five young people were invited. The Church met in solemn session to consider the "sermon" that had been committed, and decided that the Provost would be suspended from all Church privileges for six months. The Provost protests that the party was made up of youngsters, and one could not expect them to act as grown up folk would. But the Session wisely decided that if young children are launched on to a career of dissipation one cannot expect them to grow up good Christians. To grow up joyously miserable and piously pessimistic one must start young. So we think the Church Session was right. It was giving an all too rare exhibition of true Christianity. The Provost threatens to break his connexion with the Church.

The Rev. Dr. Ewan Lawson does not think Christians ought to "urge the pre-Christian view that suffering is sent from God, either as retribution for evil done, or as a means of teaching mankind a lesson." There is a certain theological "slipperiness" in calling this view of "evil" pre-Christian. It is that, of course, but so is everything else that is brought under the general heading of Christianity. But the Bible teaches this view, so has Christianity at all times, and if God has no purpose in allowing evil, why the devil is it here at all? And the existence of "evil" is, after all, only a theological question. It offers no "problem" to a strictly scientific view of the world.

It is very hard for most people to escape the snare of catchwords. Even in the act of warning others they are very likely to fall a victim to them. Thus in the course of a very readable article in the *Sunday Referee*, describing that "glorified gangster" Mussolini, Mr. Michael Peake has some comments on what he calls "the typical Italian." What this Italian is like we have not the slightest idea. Our personal acquaintance with Italians at home is limited to four brief visits to that country, but the only example of a typical Italian that we have noted is that they all speak Italian. But some are fair and some are dark, some are tall and some are short, some are pleasant and some unpleasant, some are honest and some are dishonest, some are sensible and some are silly. Curiously enough we have noticed the same peculiarities when travelling about Britain.

It is very curious this attachment to "typical" this or that. To many Frenchmen the typical Englishman is a man clad in a check suit with manners as loud as his clothing. To many natives in this country the typical Englishman is a person who is bluff, hearty, and not over-intelligent. To Kipling the typical British soldier is one who cannot speak his own language decently, fond of drink, women, plenty of courage for fighting, loyal to his bread and to his friends, but with neither the taste nor the ability to indulge in anything higher than a dog-like obedience to orders. The typical German, or Russian, or American, or the native of any other country or class, presents equally striking and fanciful figures. And yet one cannot take a hundred Britons, Germans, Italians, or others without finding a number of quite antagonistic characteristics. The ordinary soldiers do not get drunk, nor speak a fanciful cockney dialect, nor run wildly after women, nor are incapable of taking an interest in science or philosophy. The ordinary Italian is not a "play-actor," the ordinary American does not speak the crude language of Hollywood or the Bowery, the ordinary Briton is not such a fool as some of our lovers of typical characters would make him. But it is much easier to talk of the typical Italian or German than to engage in an analysis of character; for that requires a certain degree of close and clear thinking, and in the dislike of this we have the characteristic of large numbers of people in every country in the world including our popular journalists and authors.



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE,

EDITORIAL

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Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. HILL (Sydney).—Pleased to hear from you at any time.

A. F. M. MACLELLAN.—Thanks for the report. We had already noted the case. One pities the poor children who are brought up under the influence of such bigots.

H. MURRAY.—We have no intention of either begging the B.B.C. to grant us the use of the microphone, nor even considering using it under any condition that involved a censorship. In such cases to submit is to condone. We have held this attitude from the outset, and we are pleased to know that some public men have had sufficient self-respect to agree with us in this.

H. ACKROYD.—When the writer speaks of your "jaundiced outlook," it would probably be paying him a compliment to assume that he means anything at all. It is probable that all he thought of was using a term which sounded disagreeable. So far his attitude was truly Christian.

J. LANE.—Your receiving the *Freethinker* through the post is a result of our attempts to introduce the paper to new readers. Glad to note you have two copies weekly. Please pass the copy on.

A. IRVING.—Many thanks for your kind wishes.

Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

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. Rosetti, 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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One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.  
All cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

## Sugar Plums

The Sabbatarian question is again to the front in North Wales. A number of Rhyl tradespeople opened their shops on Sunday last, despite the warning of the police. We hope they will persist in their action. Of course what they are doing is illegal, but their is a point at which it becomes morally right to defy the law. And when one is dealing with such things as these old Sabbatarian laws defiance is the only remedy. If something like unity is manifested amongst those concerned, a little freedom may be secured, and seaside resorts made a great deal pleasanter on Sundays than they are at present.

There are books that are written to please the public or to satisfy a publisher. There are others that are written because the writer feels that he has something to say, and at all costs intends to say it. We are sure that behind each book belonging to the last group there is a man—or a woman. Behind the first group we are certain of nothing but an author. The writer of *Without Reserve* (F. A.

Hornibrook, Heinemann, 7s. 6d.) belongs emphatically to the class who write because they have something to say, and those who read the book will feel the better for having read it. Mr. Hornibrook has led a mildly adventurous and varied life, and his book sets forth, among other interesting personal items his conclusions concerning a variety of things which are exciting the interest of reformers in this and other countries. The war—in which he served in the medical service, and in which he and his wife did valuable work in preserving the health of the soldiers despite the hostility of many of those in high places—the Church, birth-control, militarism, Fascism, child-welfare, with many cognate topics are passed in review, and his comments in each case are striking and to the point. The book, in short, lives up to its title; the judgments are without reserve, and where so much compromising and timidity exists, that alone is enough to make it stand out as worth the reading.

I do not know of a better summary of the nature and tendencies of Fascism than is supplied in the following. After describing some of the almost incredible stupidities and brutalities of the Fascist rule, Mr. Hornibrook says:—

Those who properly appreciate the significance and the inner nature of Fascism will not be surprised at these things. Such movements are doomed to undergo a progressive degeneration. At the outset they manage to retain in their service the men and women who imagine they see in the new force the promise of better things. But power once seized must be retained, and nothing but force in its naked and most unashamed form is there to achieve this end. Independence is a crime; genius, because of its wayward nature and its tendency to explore new ways and to encourage new ideas, is something to be treated with suspicion. The fool becomes of greater value than the genius, the brute more serviceable than the humane man or woman.

The first people to go, apart from those who are at once killed or imprisoned in the name of national greatness or national "purity" are those whose decency of nature leads them to shrink from the crude brutality of the new rule. These people are fortunate if all that happens to them is a removal from office, and if they can purchase their lives at the price of silence. But when they are cleared out the new rule has to find substitutes for them, and there is only the less humane and the less independent from which to choose. Time after time the purge is applied; the worthy gives place to the less worthy, the less worthy to the still more worthless, until the system breaks down before its own progressive deterioration and undestructible better instincts of human nature.

Mr. Hornibrook is a born rebel,, and is ever ready to tilt at an absurdity or an injustice wherever he finds it, in the Church, in the law, in social life, and in those relations between men and women where stupid and out of date customs strike a man of his temperament with the directness of a blow in the face. *Without Reserve* is a stimulating book, and we hope soon to hear of a second edition. There is a strikingly powerful cartoon by "Low" which lends additional attraction to the work.

A very useful experiment was tried a fortnight ago by the West Ham and West London Branches. The two Branches combined in an excursion to Southend, and also in holding meetings. The gathering was a large one, the speakers were listened to quietly and sympathetically, and there was quite a good sale of the *Freethinker* and other literature during the meeting. That is an admirable way of combining pleasure with propaganda, and other Branches of the N.S.S. might take the hint. We have no list of the speakers, but we must thank them, whoever they were.

Mr. B. C. Bose, M.A., B.L., has now added a work entitled *Rational Religion* to his other two on *Christianity* and *Mohammedanism*. It is a remarkable work for a man of eighty-five to have written, and it is perhaps the best of the three. The author does not mince matters. He has no use for Religion at all or even for a God. His chapters dealing with the God-idea are excellent; and

though he never so describes himself, his attitude is really that of the Atheist. He sees nothing but Nature and its laws, "whose rules God even cannot change." With Buddha Mr. Bose, "doubts the existence of God," as he "cannot come to any definite conclusion" on the subject.

Mr. Bose is very severe on "revealed" religions which preach "Kill, kill, kill"; and he prefers the "Rational" to the "Revealed." He has read English Freethought works pretty thoroughly, and he points out how "the Jesus cult is vanishing by degrees, and learned critics like Baur, Stranuss, Bauer, Renan, Van Manen, Robertson, Edward Johnson, D. N. Chowdbury have come to the conclusion that not only is the New Testament full of forgeries, but some of them hold that Jesus never lived." It is to be hoped some of his Hindu readers will make a note of this and read the works of the authors named. Mr. Bose finally concludes by asserting that he "has no faith in any of the prevalent religions," and is not in any way concerned about "God." He is for "absolute toleration." *Rational Religion* is published by Messrs. Chuckervertty Chatterjee and Co., Ltd., College Square, Calcutta, for 2 Rupees. We strongly recommend Mr. Bose's finely outspoken attack on all religions including the "rational" type.

The Manchester Branch N.S.S. has been holding successful meetings during the past two months at Platt Fields, and Alexandra Park. The Branch officials feel that additional support by local saints would easily make the meetings more successful still. To-day (August 4) a meeting will be held at Platt Fields at 7.30 p.m., where members and non-members will be welcomed.

After a run of very successful meetings at Swansea, Mr. G. Whitehead proceeds to Glasgow, and will commence a series of open-air meetings there to-day (August 4). There is a large number of Freethinkers in Glasgow who can effectively help by making the meetings known to friends and acquaintances, irrespective of opinions. Particulars of the meetings will be found in the Lecture Notices column.

## The 2,983 Saints of Brittany

A "CENSUS of Saints," recently completed by a student of Breton folklore, reveals that Brittany can claim to no less than 2,983 of these holy men and women. Most of them, it must be confessed, are not recognized by the Holy Church, but the devout Breton who is an inveterate saint-maker does his own canonizing if the occasion requires it. In this way, he has equipped every diminutive Breton village with its distinctive saint, who is loved sincerely, bombarded with petitions, and credited with miracles . . . whether his name be inscribed on the Vatican's Roster of Saints or not.

Indeed, an irreverent humorist has suggested that Heaven's Halo Factory is kept working overtime in order to produce orthodox headwear in sufficient quantities for these numerous and diversified saints of Brittany. They are of all kinds, ages and dimensions: ancient and modern, local and international, male and female, historical and legendary. Some of them have magnificent shrines, such as Sainte Anne, Breton grandmother of Jesus, where at Auray a noble monument, a memorial to the 240,000 Breton war dead, was dedicated in 1932.

Others have relics, said to date back to biblical times, such as Saint-John-of-the-Finger, near Morlaix. A few have century-old statues in granite, while for others . . .

<sup>2</sup> Some frail memorial still erected high,  
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture decked,  
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh."

That a man can be both a saint and a lawyer sounds impossible—and yet, it is vividly exemplified in the life of St. Yves, the Breton Judge and lawyer, whose shrine in Treguier Cathedral attracts thousands of visitors every year. It is related that when St. Yves knocked at the heavenly gates, explaining that he was a lawyer, St. Peter quite naturally remarked, "You have knocked at the wrong door; go downstairs." But credible evidence was presented, showing that St. Yves was inaccessible to bribery, and always pleaded the cause of the widow and orphan, and so the door of paradise was swung open for him.

"Sanctus Yvo erat Brito,  
Advocatus sed non latro,  
Res miranda populo."

So runs the succinct latin epigram, which can be freely translated—"St. Yves was a Breton, a lawyer but no crook, a thing which astonished the people."

As far as is known, St. Yves is the only saint who was also a lawyer, and in 1932 the American Bar Association unveiled a bronze tablet in Treguier Cathedral which was dedicated to him. Since then Abbé Louis Lainé, who was wounded near Montfaucon when serving as interpreter with the 7th U.S. Infantry, has started a movement to place a memorial window in the cathedral in tribute to St. Yves. Professor John Henry Wigmore of North-western University, and Professor Frank S. Dains of the University of Kansas, are sponsoring this movement in America.

To the Breton peasant "the communion of saints" is more than four words, more than a pious hope, more than an article of the Apostles' Creed; to him it is a living reality. He communes with his local saints, tells them his troubles and worries, expresses his hopes and aspirations. To them he confides his earache, backache, heartache and soulache! When earthly physicians fail, he appeals to his saints.

Indeed, how a Breton doctor is able to make a living is an impenetrable mystery when we consider the constant competition given him by sainted healers who charge nothing for their services. For Breton Saints are credited with curing every variety of disease, from boils to baldness, from colic to corns, from deafness to dropsy. Obviously, most of these cures are never investigated and certified as valid by ecclesiastical authority; so the church, logically enough, rejects them as miracles, but the Breton peasant is convinced of their genuineness, and that is enough for him.

Each Breton saint has a speciality. St. Briac, for example, is recommended for epilepsy; St. Blaize and Ste. Radegonde for toothache; St. Pabu for rheumatism; St. Cadoc for deafness; St. Urlou for gout; St. Aubert for hydrophobia; St. Tupedu for corns; St. Onene is the specialist for dropsy; St. Mamert for stomach troubles; St. Bieuzy for mental derangement; St. Cueten and St. Ivy for colic; Ste. Barbe against lightning and sudden death. St. Leonarius, who learned miraculously to spell in the short space of one day, is supposed to cure bad spelling.

Job, that perfect, upright man from the Land of Uz, would certainly have hailed with gratitude St. Kirion, the Breton saint who magically causes boils to vanish into nothingness. Josh Billings once remarked, "The only good place for a boil is another fellow's neck." But St. Kirion goes beyond the American humorist; he destroys the boils completely. St. Planche is his assistant, with all skin eruptions as her speciality; true to her name, she gives her disciples "la peau blanche"—white skin.

To take no chances, the cautious Breton often consults his physician and prays to his saint at the same time; if a cure is effected, the saint often gets the credit while the doctor always gets the cash. To date, neither saints nor doctors have objected to this distribution of rewards. When Breton saints do not cure

diseases, they are expected to prevent them, or be useful in other ways. Thus St. Hervé has the reputation of protecting Breton peasants against wolves: St. Meen is the patron saint of pigs; St. Gornely of cows; St. Eloi of horses; and St. Fiacre of flowers.

Nearly every saint has his miraculous fountain, into which copper coins and other gifts are thrown by the faithful. At Yffiniac, near St. Briec, is the "Fountain of the Seven Saints," supposed to cure eczema. According to an ancient proverb the saint who works no miracles has no pilgrims. If the converse be true, then Breton saints must work many miracles, for they certainly have pilgrims by the thousand. Every month, every week, every day in fact, the saints of Brittany receive the sincere homage of a believing people, via that picturesque and distinctive institution known as the Breton pardon.

A pardon (to quote the dictionary) is a folk festival, the chief purpose of which is to approach the sacraments of the church, and so secure forgiveness for past sins; it is a quaint combination of religious zeal, Breton legends, and innocent revels, often coupled with the "Old Home Week" idea. Ste. Anne de la Palude, near Douarnenez, can count her pilgrims by the thousand at her annual pardon. St. Malo welcomes 30,000 each year in March for the "Pardon des Terre-Neuvas," when the Archbishop of Rennes bestows his benediction upon the codfishing fleet just before it sails for the Newfoundland Banks. Guimiliau, Pleyden, St. Thegonnec, Plougastel, Daoulas, Locronon, Rumengol—each has one pardon a year, some two and three. Obviously the duly canonized saints attract greater crowds on pardon day, but the unofficial saints are never forgotten.

One of the most ancient of Breton pardons is that of St. John of the Finger, which has been staged for 500 years. This shrine, near Morlaix, is so named because it contains what Bretons believe to be the index finger of St. John the Baptist. Many miracles are attributed to this finger, which is now kept in a gold container. This pardon is exceptional in that dancing is strictly forbidden. The explanation, however, is simple enough; it is considered bad taste to dance at the Pardon of St. John the Baptist, since he lost his life because of a dancing girl—Salome.

Ernest Renan, a Breton, once said: "Man creates the sanctity of what he believes and the beauty of what he loves." This epigram may not be of universal application, but it is indubitably true of Brittany and her numerous saints; they are lovable and admirable because Brittany herself deserves these two adjectives. Into his saints the Breton has put the best of himself; he has created them in the image of what he would like to be; he has assigned to them the virtues, practical and idealistic, which he would like to possess.

As the visitor gazes upon the wooden saints of Logona-Guimerc'h, or the stone martyrs of Quimperlé, he is compelled to admire wholeheartedly the Breton's faith. At the same time, he can be sincerely thankful that his simple Breton faith has received such artistic expression, thereby sprinkling the lovely province of Brittany with calvaries and chapels, churches, and cathedrals of surpassing beauty.

BERNARD RAGNER.

Treguier, Brittany.

If somebody insists upon, and wishes, as does Renan, to state that Jesus lived and suffered, the essential point to sustain this assertion and to consolidate what Strauss has vaporized, is to replace him on his mother, to give him again her warm blood, and her tepid milk and to look at him in the arms of the dreaming woman of Judea. For without Mary, no Jesus.—Michelet.

## Song for a World of Necrophages

(Dedicated to Henry S. Salt).

I AM child of the earth, but I  
am frightened of the earth;  
for between the roaring bull  
and the bird that screams from the sky,  
early at dawn I woke.  
With haste all my days are full  
and again in dream comes the stroke  
between the wild thighs of birth.

Out of the earth plants are bred  
straight from the clay and stone,  
for they feed direct on the powers  
which the sun has endlessly shed  
on the stone and the broken clay;  
and we whom a strange fate dowers  
with movement and limbs of the day  
must eat what the earth has grown

The plant that we eat brings back  
the rebellious blood to its fate,  
the earth of our genesis.  
We, in our wandering track,  
lust for the wings of the void;  
but hunger and thirst, or a kiss,  
see our vain lies decoyed  
back to the truth which we hate.

But ah, we refuse to unbend.  
We hate the thighs of the earth  
opening with flower and fruit.  
We long forever to spend  
our lives in a circle of force,  
self-sufficient. Our hungers pollute  
that dream which our fears divorce  
from the soil in hopes for pure worth.

Therefore our lives we damn  
with pollution thousandfold worse.  
To live on ourselves we desire,  
and so we eat bullock or lamb.  
Since cannibalism fails  
with its magical lure, then fire  
cooks vicarious flesh, and tales  
of a dying god hide the curse.

Because we are frightened to live  
direct on the earth through its plants  
we lust for remorseful flesh,  
and, sogged in its salt, cry "Forgive!"  
Deeper the cancer rots  
in corroded blood and the mesh  
draws tighter its venomous knots.  
No quiet the conscience grants.

Wilder the speed-thirst spins  
to escape from the earth, to escape  
from the cry of the victimised past.  
The father-bull of our sins  
roars and the anthems rise.  
That hymn of terror will last  
while we lust for a God and disguise:  
the salt pang of our cannibal-rape:

*This lamb died for me  
this bull died for me  
this pig died for me  
and lives in my eternity.*

*I live upon dead flesh.  
What dies for me saves me,  
and the blood of its dying  
with new life laves me.*

*Blessed the lamb and the bull,  
blessed the pig and the fish,  
blessed the fowl that lies  
my substitute on the dish.*

What dies for me saves me.  
All die that I may live.  
Glory, terror of Glory,  
to the dead for the life they give.

Glory, glory, glory  
to the corpse that I chew.  
I eat a bit of cooked corpse  
and I arise anew.

up from the split sepulchre,  
up from the bowels of earth,  
and thus I think to cheat  
the crushing jaws of birth.

Up to the Father  
in cannibal-glee I arise,  
Earth, what have I to do with you?  
I eat death to gain the skies.

JACK LINDSAY.

## Reason and Violence

### I.

OPINION expressed through Freethought circles and organs shows clearly wide differences obtaining among those who support this honourable principle on many cogent issues of religious, cosmic, and social doctrine. This in itself is not surprising at the present juncture of affairs, and is simply noted here for a particular conclusion. On the other hand, there is an opposite tendency to set up a standard of "orthodoxy" as regards certain categories of thought and inquiry. For instance, if one prefers the word "Agnostic" to "Atheist" to define an attitude to the problem of Existence—that must indicate some weakness of mental fibre in this connexion. Or, in another way, if despite the wealth of learning expended to prove the mythical origin of Jesus and Christianity (or because of it) one remains unconvinced of this theory as a satisfactory explanation of an obscure historical development—here, too, such a disciple is still far from "the Kingdom." When we touch vital questions of social life the cleavage is most pronounced; where, nonetheless, in matters of material controversy, exponents of specific revolutionary tenets claim possession of final truth. Hence discussion of these disturbing things is deprecated by some for its effect on the unity of philosophical propaganda and association. But a Freethought movement that inhibits candid examination of any human interest whatever is a contradiction in terms. Only by their frank and open canvass can unbelievers in traditional beliefs and sanctions realize how they respectively stand to problems of a confused and distraught era. The promotion of a sounder civilization and culture is complementary to the pursuit of speculative truth.

The part to be played by reason or violence in this process is of import alike as regards past and present happenings. By reason, I wish not to imply an absolute criterion of truth and rightness which some possess and others do not (a sense implied at times by the use of the word), but simply the exercise of argument and persuasion in the settlement or solution either of national or international concerns, disputes, difficulties, in lieu of recourse to physical coercion and war. For since the last explosion of force on a grand scale in the World War, and while lip service is given to ideas of peace and amity, there is still abroad faith in the efficacy of the "big stick" as a short way of obtaining results; and in quite opposite quarters.

The sinister feature of war and the war spirit is its persistence, despite its dire inflictions, on which head

nothing further remains to be said. There are unresolved controversies over the World War—shown in recent critical references to the attitude of the clergy thereto, or some of them, in this journal and elsewhere. Most of our present discontents are the sequence of that tremendous convulsion which closed one era of history and opened another, the portents of which are still uncertain. And one's own relation to the affair must be defined at the outset in any attempt to appraise these consequences. Those who supported our intervention from the outset occupy a quite different position from those who opposed it, or, since, look upon it as a mistake. Faced by the situation and alternatives then presented to this country, I elected for intervention; and may mention that, not being exactly fitted at the time for the fighting line, volunteered for service in another capacity, and did not return from France until the spring of 1919. Therefore I have little knowledge of what was said, or done, at home by the clergy or anyone else, and also care nothing, save in so far as it helped or retarded the pursuit of the business to a more or less successful end; for once in it that was all that mattered.

The war came as a catastrophic event long in preparation, which swept away the "values" that previously obtained to estimate things, relations, possibilities. It was unique in its claim on the whole manhood and resources of the country to maintain a patrimony which militarist nations regarded as an easy prey from our own unwarlike habits and casual modes.

Previous affairs had been conducted by the professional fighting services, supplemented on occasion by a few volunteers. This contest made increasing demands on the will, courage, endurance of the whole civil population. It meant to the ordinary citizen a sudden reversion to barbaric instincts—a discarding of the standards and restraint that regulate ordinary life. *Punch*, in its many contributions to a sense of this incongruity—the grim, ironic humour that sustained the moral of our people through the long ordeal—hit this off in a cartoon at the time. A quiet citizen is going about his ordinary pursuits; his breakfast and paper in the morning, journey to business, his after recreation—a game of cards or tennis. Attention is caught by a poster: "Your King and Country need you." Ah! . . . he responds to the appeal. Some episodes of military training follow; last of all he is a raging combatant charging amid bursting shells. . . .

While questions of origins and causation may remain, individually, a *chose jugée*, one can indicate here a line of personal decision. Various specious defences were given by statesmen for precipitating a conflict, where the real motives were far removed from the effect of an assassin's pistol. Some of us who had studied the ambitions attributed to the dominant Germanic powers were confirmed in their conclusions by a remark in the "scrap of paper" interview. Seeking to manoeuvre England into neutrality by certain territorial guarantees, when pressed over French possessions the reply was in the negative. Quite so. A few hammer strokes, a prostrate France, a dictated peace with opportunity to choose among her great colonial empire—the widest German dreams could then be fulfilled.

In the light of what did happen, this might well have materialized had Britain not intervened. These

<sup>1</sup> In his book, *Secret and Confidential*, Brig.-General W. Waters, British military attaché, Berlin, 1901, says: "William II. told me that England had become degenerate through luxury. I replied that he did not understand my countrymen, who would fight to the death for a cause, adding that 'deeds of heroism are performed daily in Britain by miners, shop-assistants, children and others, which are taken as a matter of course with us, but, in a continental country, would be rewarded by the highest honours.'"

possessions had ceased to be a source of anxiety to us since the *entente*. In the hands of an aggressive power of another temper and calibre, a fresh and highly disadvantageous strategical situation would have arisen. A successful war of the kind might further have left Europe, apart from Russia, in vassalage to the Central Powers—the strongholds of medieval absolutism; with possibilities of greatly enhanced strength and influence to the Vatican.

All which could little advance the principles of liberty, free expression, representative government, social betterment set in the higher purpose of English thought and culture.

Whate'er I be, old England is my dam!

So there's my answer to the Judges, clear.

I'm nothing of a fox, nor of a lamb;

I don't know how to bleat nor how to leer:

I'm for the nation!

That's why you see me by the roadside here,

Returning home from transportation.<sup>2</sup>

Well, we closed: and at length came out, somehow, on top. But—as Wellington said of Waterloo: "It was a damned near thing!" The dangers to which British forces were exposed at the outset by the action of an Ally were retrieved only through their own surpassing courage and endurance. Their opponent, the German General von Kluck, has expressed unqualified admiration for the first British army in France. "Incomparable!" And whatever one's feeling about the leadership all round, the *people* did not fail. Not alone did measures taken to frustrate "ruthless submarine warfare" save us from starvation, but the iron nerve of seamen who were not to be frightened off the water, and returned there after being blown up half a dozen times. The civil population faced sore trials. When after four years of weary strife we found "our back to the wall" the superhuman feat of the army that foiled the immense German effort to break the line at its weakest point and finish the business—this turned the scale. In the words of its commander, General Gough: "For eight days of ceaseless onslaughts a British army of twelve divisions defied and fought to a standstill an overwhelming superior enemy force of forty-two divisions. At the end of that time such was the bitter resolution of the defence that the German attacking force had no further fight left in it. This result was achieved not by the brilliant strategy of generals, but by the devoted courage and dogged refusal to be beaten of the British soldier himself. . . . A division whose strength should normally have been 10,000 infantry could now scarcely number 1,000 war-weary soldiers. Nine thousand heroic defenders were either wounded or lay thickly scattered across every yard of that bitterly contested battle ground."

Beyond the burden of waste and suffering, this vast conflict should bring home the terrible uncertainty of war in its upshot; and that violence begets a recurrent sequence. Events to-day indicate this truth is still far from recognition.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

Shall we class original Buddhism with religion, or shall we agree that Primitive Buddhism ignored religion? As C. P. Tiele said, "Buddhism, in fact, rejected the whole dogmatic system of the Brahmans, their worship, and hierarchy, and simply substituted for them a higher moral teaching." With this opinion we shall have to agree unless we can show that although original Buddhism disregarded gods, it made use, in its efforts to escape from the chain of reincarnation, of a psychic power transcending man. . . . Here we are evidently in the sphere of magic and not religion.—J. H. Leuba.

<sup>2</sup> G. Meredith: *The Old Chartist*.

## Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."

DEMOCRACY AND FREETHOUGHT

SIR,—In his article on "Freethought or Democracy," G. H. Taylor states that contemporary democracy is inimical to the welfare of Freethought, but he does not get beyond making it a statement. He condemns the system in operation in Soviet Russia, which, of course, is not a democratic system at all. He libels the working classes, and pours scorn on politics, but he does not tell us why Democracy and Freethought are not compatible.

Surely Democracy is necessary for Freethought! Freethought means not only that we should think freely, unhampered by tradition, but that we should express our thoughts freely, unhampered by legislation. What is the use, therefore, of being able to think and express our thoughts if such expression is ineffective?

Obviously, as far as the Government of the Country is concerned, we cannot all give our individual views to the Minister of Education, for instance, but we can, in an indirect way, support or oppose at the ballot box the Party to which he belongs. And, incidentally, the ballot box has been one of the greatest educational factors in the life of the people.

Democracy does not mean that we all want to rule, it simply means that we all want to choose our rulers.

The ultimate end of Democracy is very much the same as the ultimate end of Freethought—to bring into being a race of people who will be dignified and independent, capable of giving intelligent direction to their lives.

Take the power from the hands of the people, or limit their sphere of thought and expression, and you create a race of servile people, without self-respect or courage.

Mr. Taylor suggests that an expert group of tested legislators shall rule the country, but he does not say who shall choose the legislators. He passes over the question by saying that it is not relevant to the title of his article. However, either they must choose themselves, and there you have Dictatorship, or they must be chosen by the people, and there you have Democracy.

The suggestion is that the people should surrender their power to the specialists. Now it is quite possible that Mr. Taylor and myself might differ in opinion as to which specialist to surrender to. I happen to think that Mr. Herbert Morrison is the most capable man in the country on transport, but Mr. Taylor might think differently.

Mr. J. M. Keynes is recognized by the majority of people as being an expert economist, but, as a Socialist, I think most of his conclusions are wrong, therefore I should hate to surrender my power to him. So where are we?

Freethought is, we agree, necessary. Difference of opinion is therefore inevitable, and as long as opinions differ, and people have the right to express their opinions, you will have some people trying to convert other people to their point of view. This is healthy. It broadens the outlook and makes for progress. On big issues majorities and minorities are sure to exist, but better a wrong majority of free people than a right minority where the rest are mental slaves, allowing other people to do their thinking for them.

And who shall say who is right and wrong? The majority, as well as the minority, will always be wrong to somebody.

At any rate, under Democracy there is always the opportunity for the minority to convert the majority and so become a majority themselves. That is what makes the system under which we live tolerable. If we had no power to alter it, it would be intolerable.

DORA SEED.

### DOES FORCE FAIL?

SIR,—In your issue of July 28, the writer of "Acid Drops" says: "Forceful repression, whether of people or ideas, is in the long run bound to fail." I have often heard this stated, but I have never heard of any historical facts which support it.

Gibbon says that at the date of the conversion of Con-

stantine (about 320 A.D.) not more than one twentieth of the people of the Roman Empire were Christians. As soon as Christianity was made compulsory, Paganism vanished in a few generations.

Thirteen hundred years ago the people of Palestine, Syria, Turkey, Egypt, Algeria, Tunis, and Morocco were wholly Christian. To-day they are entirely Moslem. The change was made by force, and it was made so swiftly and completely that there is no record of a single person resisting it.

Four centuries ago every inhabitant of England was a Roman Catholic, with the exception of a few Jews. To-day only 8 per cent are Catholic. The change was entirely due to the will of one man, and the opposition was so feeble, that the only people who refused to take the Oath of Supremacy to Henry were Fisher, More, and the monks of the Charterhouse.

The same thing has happened again and again all over the world. Every nation believes to-day what some powerful ruler ordered it to believe, and there is no record of a religion ever having been established in any other way.

As the world will still last for millions of years, I have no idea what will happen "in the long run." I do know, however, that for far more than a thousand years the repression of a belief may be entirely successful.

R. B. KERR.

#### "LA VERITE OBLIGE"

SIR,—Freethought and the search for truth are often well served by putting different stories side by side. Such comparisons can point a moral, as well as any picture. Let us do it.

The Virtues and the Vices of the *News-Chronicle* are well known to most Freethinkers. So are the virtues, and the lack thereof, of the *Daily Herald*.

In the same way, the V.s and V.s of Lady Astor, Tory Member for Plymouth, and of Mr. Logan, Roman Catholic Christian Member for Liverpool, are not unknown.

My first story is from the Parliamentary Report, p. 2, *Daily Herald*, Thursday, July 18 :—

Lady Astor declared that malnutrition was not the result of poverty, but of not knowing the right kind of food to give the children. She went on to suggest that the high percentage of maternal mortality was due to attempted abortion. A large number of lives could have been saved by birth-control.

Mr. Logan declared that the welfare of the nation would not depend on the spread of birth-control knowledge "only fit for the gutter," but on the building-up of a healthy manhood and womanhood.

The *News-Chronicle* report of the same passage in the same debate is thuswise :—

Lady Astor (Con. Plymouth), made what Mr. W. McKeag (Simonite, Durham) described as a courageous speech on maternal mortality. She insisted that the high percentages of deaths was due to attempted abortion. "I know," she said, "of the horrors of those women. Imagine a woman married to a working man with a very low wage, who has two, three or four children, with the prospect of a fifth. Naturally she is going to do her best to get rid of that one—and she dies. It is appalling the misery of these women.\*"

Mr. Logan (Lab. Liverpool), who is a Roman Catholic : "May I ask the noble lady if she, as a responsible Member of Parliament, is going to say that the mother of three or four children has got the right to get rid of one?"

Lady Astor : "I am not. I am trying to prevent that mother having to try to get rid of that one. I am trying to give her a chance not to practice criminal abortion as some of them are doing, because they do not know the proper method of birth-control."

"Comparisons are odorous"—but, oft-times, useful. I leave the issue to our readers—religious as well as Freethinkers—with one comment. We may not love Lady Astor; but dialectically—the honours are with her. Mr. Logan has it in "langwidg"—which is what one might expect.

ATHOSO ZENOO.

\* The italics are the *News-Chronicle's*.

## Obituary

OSMAN RAY

ON Tuesday, July 23 the remains of Osman Ray were cremated at Golders Green Crematorium. Although not a member of the N.S.S. he was a life-long Freethinker, and one whose opinions were well known to all who knew him. An excellent husband, father, and brother, his death is a grievous loss to the surviving members of the family. Although a sufferer from heart trouble for some time, he refused to relinquish control of his affairs until the end, when death took place at 57 years of age. His wish for a Secular Service was duly carried out. Mr. A. D. McLaren officiated at the cremation.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.30, Mr. C. Tuson.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead) : 11.30, Sunday, August 4, Mr. C. Tuson. Highbury Corner, 7.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Leighton Road, Kentish Town, 8.0, Wednesday, August 7, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 7.0, Sunday, August 4, Mr. P. Goldman. Rushcroft Road, Brixton, 8.0, Tuesday, August 6, Mr. F. P. Corrigan. Manor Street, Clapham High Street, 8.0, Friday, August 9, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Gee, Wood, Bryant and Tuson. 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Wood and Bryant. 7.30, Wednesdays, Messrs. Evans and J. Darby. Thursdays, 7.30, Mr. Saphin. Fridays, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Connell. Current *Freethinker* on sale at The Kiosk.

### COUNTRY

#### OUTDOOR.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (Bridge End) : 8.0, Friday, August 2, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

COLNE : 7.30, Tuesday, August 6, Mr. J. Clayton.

BASINGTON (Lane) : 8.0, Wednesday, August 7, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HILTON : 8.0, Tuesday, August 6, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HIGHAM : 7.30, Monday, August 5, Mr. J. Clayton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (West Regent Street, Glasgow) : 8.0, Sunday, August 4, Albert Road, Queen's Park, Glasgow, 8.0, Monday, August 5. The Mound, Edinburgh, 7.30, Tuesday, August 6. Albert Road, Glasgow, 8.0, Wednesday, August 7. Grant Street, St. George's Cross, Glasgow, 8.0, Thursday, August 8. Albert Road, Glasgow, 8.0, Friday, August 9. Mr. Whitehead will speak at each meeting.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths) : 8.0, Sunday, August 4, Mr. D. Robinson. Belfast Road, Knotty Ash, 8.30, Tuesday, August 6, A Lecture. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, August 8, Mr. D. Robinson.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Platt Fields, Manchester) : 3.0 and 7.0, A Lecture.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market) : 7.30, Friday, August 2, Mr. A. Flanders.

PRESTON (Town Hall Square) : 3.0 and 7.0, Sunday, August 4, Mr. J. Clayton.

SEAHAM HARBOUR (Church Street) : 8.0, Saturday, August 3, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

WORSTHORNE : 7.30, Friday, August 2, Mr. J. Clayton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue) : 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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