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• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •

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Letters to the Editor, etc.*

Views and Opinions

The Valour of Man

THE other day the newspapers gave prominence to the case of a doctor in East Africa and his native assistant, who had innoculated themselves with the terrible sleeping sickness to test the efficacy of a particular drug. Those who know anything of the inner history of medical science are aware that there is nothing unusual in this. The name of one of the great men in medicine—John Hunter—recalls the fact that he came to his death because of his repeated self-innoculations in connexion with his study of syphilis. A few of such cases become generally known, the majority are unchronicled, but in any case they soon fade from the public memory. The men who so act receive little or no public honour, and when they die their widows or their dependents are fortunate if they receive £50 or £100 a year by way of pension. Had these men been successful soldiers they would have been widely honoured, they might have been given a peerage, and their place in history would have been assured. As a civilized Christian country we pay immensely greater attention to those whose business it is to take life, than we do to those whose work it is to save it.

A little while ago there occurred the terrible mining disaster at Gresford. Here also there were men ready to risk their lives—some actually perished—in the attempt to rescue their comrades. This is not uncommon in the history of coal-mining. And beyond these cases there are those of a commoner kind, which because they are common receive no notice at all. There are all the heroisms of public and private life—the fireman who risks his life at his job, the sailor who braves the dangers of the seas, the unnoticed heroisms involved in the efforts of a widowed mother striving to bring up her children, the risks taken by doctors and nurses during the prevalence of an epidemic, with the thousand and one cases of men and women who will dare all to help their fellows, asking for no notice of

their doing and no reward for having done what they can to help or save.

Because the war in 1914-18 was fought on a large scale, we have an annual commemoration of the dead, at which we use their sacrifice to keep the attractiveness of war alive, and we have a tablet in Westminster Abbey to the "Unknown Warrior." But we have no yearly day of commemoration for the heroes and the heroism of daily life; the King and his Generals and his Bishops make no annual ceremonious appearance to commend the heroisms of daily life and to bow their heads at its manifestations. For these social heroes do not strive to take life. No home has been rendered desolate by their action; they have left behind them no treasury of hatred, they have performed no deeds that sow the dragon teeth of enmity and revenge. They were just men and women doing what they did because of the social bond that knits the generations together.

* * *

War and Civilization

Now I do not wish to say anything against the courage displayed by the soldier, although in my judgment it is not often of a very lofty kind. I do not wish to quarrel with the statement so often made by our militarists—generally in complete ignorance of the only sense in which it is eternally and valuably true—that man is a fighting animal. For reasons that follow I agree with the statement. Of course man is a fighting animal. Had he not been, human life could not be what it is, and could not be what we hope it may become. Man is a fighting animal, and I would have him fight, not less, but more. Life itself is a battlefield and requires courage if we are to emerge victorious. I am merely challenging the common position, often explicitly stated and everywhere implied, that the military life is a field in which courage and loyalty is developed, and without it these qualities wither.

In an incautious moment John Ruskin said:—

All great nations learned their truth of word and strength of thought in war; they were nourished in war and wasted by peace; taught by war and wasted by peace—in a word, they were born in war and expired in peace.

That is not true; on the contrary it is demonstrably false. In most cases the wars have been partial and limited in their extent, and their consequences have been masked. But 1914 gave us a test of this theory, for then the world was at war, and the nations engaged were taxed to the utmost. Can it be said that anyone gained by that war? I do not mean financial gain only, but mental and moral gain. The net result was demoralization in every direction—mental, moral and social. Whatever idealism filled the mind of any nation when the war began was completely destroyed by the time it came to an end. Social demoral-

ization set in, crimes of violence increased, respect for truth and honesty was weakened. For those with eyes to see and a brain to think there was offered a complete disproof of the thesis that the military life offers a field for the strengthening of character.

Our philosophers of the quarter-deck and the parade ground were wrong, as they usually are wrong where the higher aspects of life are concerned. Loyalty to one's fellows is not created by war, but originates in the field of social existence. Discipline belongs fundamentally to the give and take of group life. Courage is born and developed by the numerous acts which man is called upon to perform in the fight between humanity and its *natural* enemies and obstacles. The Hitlers and Mussolinis and our fire-eating declaimers have got hold of the wrong end of the stick. If they are right the virtues they praise should grow stronger through the practice of war. But the complete reverse is obviously the case. There is not a single exception to the rule that an army in the field decays if it is too long removed from the humanizing influence of civil life. Discipline becomes loose, comradeship weakens, the moral fibre of an army loses its quality. The "comradeship of the trenches," about which so much has been said—mainly by those who are interested in surrounding war with a romantic glamour—while true in some cases, does not exist in so great a measure as does comradeship in social life. The greatest condemnation of militarism is that it cannot by itself sustain its own morale. Morally and materially it is dependent upon a healthy social life from which to draw. Morally and materially it is parasitic in essence. Under modern conditions it gives nothing of value and keeps the human struggle on a lower level than it otherwise would be. It is not true that nations have been nourished by war and decay during peace. The only sense in which that is even plausibly true is the sense in which people may become rich by robbing their neighbours. The parasite can only live in terms of a number of superior organisms on which it may prey. The true generalization is that nations have perished because they have expended in war the qualities born in peace, and war has left them too weak to continue their existence. A few more years of the World War would have well demonstrated the truth of that generalization.

* * *

Transforming War

I said awhile ago that I was not pleading for less fighting, but for more. I say that man is a fighting animal, and that if he is to progress he must continue the fight between himself and his natural organic and inorganic enemies that began in the far-off ages when he was just emerging from the animal stage. But if the history of humanity teaches one thing more clearly than another it is the lesson that progress consists in carrying on essentially the same struggle under different forms. As in the case of the sexes, the animal lust with which man commences in his semi-human stage, is gradually replaced by the development of æsthetic and other considerations which determines the form in which the sex-passion shall express itself, so the fight which began with the crude contest of teeth and claws is gradually lifted to the struggle of conflicting ideas and ideals. The animal becomes human, and our militarists would have the human revert to the animal, using the higher qualities as a means of perpetuating the lower ones. Man did not develop because he imitated the animals around him, but because he rose superior to them, using his greater development of brain and character and communal life as an instrument to achieve his ends.

I am assuming that even though the very question-

able statement that human society began in warfare were true, there is no need for us to strive to perpetuate the reign of brute force. But the statement itself is false. It is not the conflict of groups, but the *cohesion of the group* that gives us the seed-plot of loyalty, courage, discipline and all those qualities that are exploited in warfare. The courage of the doctor risking his life to provide a cure for others, the daring of the mountaineer, the sense of duty which keeps men and women at their posts despite all they may have to face in doing so, the love of adventure which sends men down into the depths of the sea and up into the unknown region of the stratosphere, all represent a higher and truer human courage than the mad frenzy of battle in which man approaches nearer to that animal world from which he has so slowly risen.

Let me say once more that I do not wish to rob man of his fighting qualities; I wish to see them directed into other channels than war, and expended on more worthy purposes than that of slaughtering an enemy—no not an enemy, but masses of men against whom there is no individual ill-feeling.

Writing in the early months of the war, when the press as a whole, and the Churches as a whole, and I regret to say very many who did not belong to any of the churches, were doing what they could to inflame passion and cloud judgment, in the last months of 1914 I wrote in these columns:—

If war is to be killed it must be killed by an idea of an opposite kind. Public opinion and public sentiment must be so modified as to function in a more human, a more civilized and a more socially effective manner. If therefore, to use a cant phrase, we are fighting to end war, we must face the fact that this is not the business of an army, however powerful. The beating of Germany in the field, or the riding of the Allies through the streets of Berlin will not secure it. It is not the destruction of German bodies that will end war, but the getting of different ideas into German heads. And not alone into German heads, but into the heads of other people as well. Guns may kill men, but they are powerless against ideas. Armies may frustrate an ambition, yet an ambition does not die because it fails to secure realization, but only when it is replaced by one of a different kind. People will fight for what they believe in just so long as they think it worth fighting for. Danger will not deter. There is no danger so great that man will not face, and for that we have cause to be thankful. The only time that men will cease fighting for a thing is when they realize that it is not worth fighting for. In short, ideals can only be killed by ideals. Let a people realize that, and they will have taken the first long step towards giving the world an enduring peace.

All that has happened since 1914 has provided justification for what was said. The *Freethinker* is one of the few papers in this country that can look back upon its war-time record without regret and without shame.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Evangelical sweetness consists in inculcating Faith by dint of abuse, threats, and tortures. It is by the aid of such "sweetmeats" as these that the Church causes her children to swallow the pill of Faith.—*Voltaire*.

The drama of Atys (or Attis) at Byblos, the child bursting from an opened tree, was highly remunerative. The priests of Asia Minor, like the ecclesiastical princes of Italy, speculated at the same time on piety, love, and fortune-telling. They drew from their Atys a lucrative brokerage; and grew rich, and became kings and popes.

Michélet.

Impenitent Impertinence

"If all religions but one are certainly wrong, what is the chance of one being certainly right?"—*G. W. Fools.*
 "We can cure the people of superstition. We can, by speaking and writing, make men more enlightened and better."—*Voltaire.*

THE BISHOP OF LONDON, who is regarded as the "Sunny Jim" of the Established Church, is in low spirits, not because the dear clergy are preparing to strike for higher stipends, but from a feverish apprehension that "the times are out of joint," and that he is a heaven-sent messenger to put things in their proper position. The fashionable churches in the West-End of London still display the very latest and most expensive show of dresses and millinery in their pews; silver coins still rattle joyously in the collection-plates; but to watch his lordship's face, it would seem as though the end of all things was at hand, and as imminent as a clash between Italy and Ethiopia, or a General Election.

This time his anxiety is not for finance. It concerns what a Frenchman called, "les girls," or, to be precise, it is the ladies of the stage chorus. The Public Morality Council, a high-sounding sectarian organization, of which the Bishop of London is President, has been making some disturbing and highly-coloured criticisms of what it considers the Lady Godiva tendencies of the English stage. Its "semi-nudes" it condemns as "degrading" to young audiences, "calculated to excite sensuously impressionable minds." In short, this council of purity-mongers is sternly resolved that such exhibitions are too—too utter, and must be tolerated no longer than is unavoidably necessary; that is until after the summer holidays.

But, as Shakespeare puts it, "soft awhile!" At first glance these lurid descriptions are a little startling to those people who do not often trouble the pew-openers, but who do actually attend theatres and other places of amusement. Besides, this Public Morality Council's ideas of nudity and semi-nudity may be very Early Victorian, and by no means in harmony with an age in which sun-bathing and swimming are very familiar features. For what we know, the worthy Council's ideal covering for the "female form divine" may be the lengthy flannel nightgowns worn by our great grandmothers. What brings a flush to the damask cheek of a bachelor bishop may not be sufficient to cause the lions in Trafalgar Square to roar in indignation, or burly policemen to faint in the witness-box.

Macaulay has told us that the old Puritan objection to bear-baiting was not that the pastime caused pain to the bear, but that it gave pleasure to the beholders. We suspect that there is so much in common between Praise-God Barebones and the Public Morality Council and its worthy, if censorious, President. Indeed, the clerical Nosey-Parkers are for ever seeking to interfere with the amusements of ordinary people. No one ever possessed such long noses for nastiness as the clergy. Years ago they thought they saw all manner of abomination in the music-halls. Then the popular novel came under their eagle eyes, and straightway became a thing to be avoided. Then it was the turn of the cinema, whose films were said to mock-high heaven, although the attack may not have been entirely disassociated from the Sunday opening of such places of amusement, and its ultimate effect upon ecclesiastical finance. For, as Mark Twain said, the difference between a theatre and a church is that you pay to go in one, and pay to get out of the other.

Observe, that it is always popular forms of amuse-

ment that cause blood-pressure in priests and their satellites. No admonishing finger is raised at the doings of society folks. Evening-dress cleavage has excited comment in the United States, and among film-producers, but our home-grown ecclesiastical censors have never observed that at society dinners the half-drunk lean against the half-naked. If such scenes were repeated at working-men's clubs, we wonder! The wealthy West-End of London conceals quite as many forms of vice as Cairo and Port Said, but there is no clerical crusade to mend such a state of affairs. The choicest dinner parties of the wealthy take place on Sundays, but it is the poor man who has hours of drinking regulated, and his amusements so curtailed that Sunday, the weekly holiday, is by far the deadest and dullest day of the entire seven.

To read the clerical polemic against the English stage, as if it were a noisome danger to the nation, is a lesson in the tortuous tactics of Priestcraft. When such attacks come from priests and their satellites, who thrust the open Christian Bible into the hands of innocent childhood, one's sense of justice and fair-play is outraged. For there are things in that Oriental sacred book which are calculated to bring the blush of modesty on any face except that of a priest. The clergy attach very loose meanings to the words they mouth so recklessly, but how such men can read the account of Ezekiel's banquet, or the story of Onan, or the adventures of Lot's wife, without any remarks, and point the finger of scorn at the English stage as being comparable to Sodom and Gomorrah is inexplicable, except on the hypothesis that they themselves are as much humbugs as the Rev. Mr. Stiggins and Samuel Pecksniff.

If the distant view of a stage chorus is likely to corrupt the morals of young people, what, in the name of common sense is the Authorized Version of the Christian Bible calculated to do? There may be found plain, unvarnished accounts of rape, adultery, and unnatural vice, written with all the nasty particularity and florid love of detail peculiar to Eastern writers. The flowery, heated rhetoric of "The Song of Solomon" leaves nothing to the imagination, and the least lettered reader can appreciate the glowing periods. In short, Biblical nastiness is a thing by itself, a survival of the old semi-barbarous days when men wrote for men, when even well-known scholars slanged one another in print, like Billingsgate fish-porters.

This particular sacred book of the East is not an ordinary book, for it has been adopted by the English Parliament. It is stamped as God's Word by Act of Parliament. Common belief supports Parliament in this extraordinary assumption. It is used as a fetish for swearing upon in Courts of Law and elsewhere. The book is an adopted child of the English Parliament, and some day it will be discarded by its protector. For what Parliament makes it can also unmake.

The Puritanical pose of this so-called Public Morality Council is, what their own Prayer Book calls, "a matter of supererogation." If these excellent Christians had any really satisfactory reason for safeguarding the morals of the rising generation of English men and women, they would realize, at once, that if a distant view of the human form will corrupt a young boy or girl, the perusal of their own Bible is a much more serious matter for concern. This sacred book contains detailed accounts, not only of sex matters, but also of perverted sexual cases. Instead of holding up their hands in simulated horror at a stage-chorus, let these holy people set an example. Let them cease to force into the hands of little children a volume which they dare no longer read aloud in its completeness to an audience of men and women.

Until they consent to do this, their pretensions are nauseating. They have an aroma like that of a crowded cabin of a small Channel steamer on a rough day. However nauseous the whole matter may be, it is not the first time that Church and Stage have been at loggerheads, and the Church has not always had the better of the argument. When Sarah Bernhardt, the great tragedienne, visited America she was attacked violently from the pulpit by a loud-voiced evangelist. Sarah wrote a little note to the offending pastor, which ran: "Dear Sir: It is not customary for people in our profession to insult one another. Yours faithfully, Sarah Bernhardt." It was a most telling rejoinder from the greatest actress of her generation, and none the worse for being a triumph of brains over brawn.

MIMNERMUS.

The Inception of Scientific Agriculture

MAN is essentially a land animal, and, save for the fishes of the sea, all his food, raw materials and other necessities arise from the earth.

During the eighteenth century England was, for all practical purposes, a self-contained country. With the exception of tea, then comparatively little used; coffee, sugar and foreign wines, native agriculture furnished the food of the people. It seems strange that, in times so recent, the population was so scanty, and that the relatively primitive husbandry of the period sufficed for the needs of the community, while wheat, in seasons of plenty, was still exported abroad. Indeed, all the exports of the eighteenth century originated in agriculture. Wool, woollen fabrics, and cereals which figured so prominently in exported articles were, however, chiefly local products. The Eastern Counties alone produced a surplus of grain, as all other areas needed their corn crops for domestic consumption. The production of wool, again, was confined to those counties in which sheep could be successfully pastured.

The wretched roads still surviving, precluded transport or travel in many districts, and rural England, in the earlier century, mainly consisted in small isolated communities. In 1720 great woods and wastelands abounded that were nearly destitute of human inhabitants, while the local agricultural customs were those that had persisted from the dawn of recorded history.

Apart from the forests and commons, the Northern, Eastern, Central, and Southern regions of England were largely arable where the crops were raised in enormous fields. The sons of the soil were domiciled in adjoining hamlets and villages, but the modern farmhouse with its attendant barns and sheds was seldom seen. Still, in Western England the land and its occupants were much as they to-day remain. The copious rainfall of the West was, and is, highly favourable to pasture, while far less suitable for cereals. Nevertheless, so early as the opening eighteenth century, the immemorial one-field system had been here and there supplanted by the creation of grasslands and the adoption of small field farming.

From days dimly remote, the acres of England had been cultivated on a communal basis, and the soil essential for the sustenance of the village community consisted in large open fields separated into strips alternating with those of their neighbours, so that all could have a share in the good and less good. Often the strips were no more than half an acre in extent, and as such a system made the inclosure of each

man's holding impossible, so all had to conform to a common course of cropping." (C. S. Orwin, *Agriculture and Rural Life*).

This scheme presumably arose from a desire to establish equity, but its dreary uniformity prevented progress. All farmers were compelled to cultivate the same crop, and when harvest was over the stubbles were all available for the grazing of the community's cattle and sheep. In consequence any choice ewe, heifer, or mare might be made pregnant by any wretched stallion, bull, or ram at hand. Pedigree stock was thus made impossible. It was only as novel crops were introduced from abroad, and as husbandry evolved into a remunerative occupation that the venerable one-field system's shortcomings became plainly apparent.

The departures which led to the appearance of modern agricultural holdings were heralded, even in the sixteenth century, when the inclosure of heath and common land was already in operation, and this appropriation steadily increased as time went on. In countless cases grave injustices occurred, and in losing their rights of pasture on the common lands with other rural amenities, the peasantry suffered severely. There was no special plan of appropriation as, at times, the lord of the manor or other influential landowner secured possession of communal holdings when tenancies expired, or the property might be acquired by purchase, and sometimes neighbouring landowners might agree as to a division of the spoil. Fraudulent methods were occasionally employed, and intimidation was a weapon ready to the hand of the covetous appropriator. In these various ways inclosures were frequently occurring, and it is stated that: "In some parts of the country all trace of common-field-farming had already disappeared by Johnson's time." By force or fraud and more rarely by voluntary agreement, land was inclosed, and at the end of the seventeenth century the agreements of interested parties were being increasingly submitted to the Court of Chancery for ratification. This practice soon led to applications for private Acts of Parliament to legalize the inclosure of what for centuries had been common land.

Yeoman farmers' rights to utilize commons were greater than those of other parishioners. Each yeoman had his allotted strips of ploughland; his crops of hay from the meads, in addition to his right of pasturing his livestock on the commons. Even those who possessed no arable land of any kind, or any claim to mow or graze in paddocks yet enjoyed prescriptive or granted-rights to pasture sheep, geese and a cow, as well as those of cutting turf or heath-plants for fuel. But many, perhaps a majority of the parishioners, held no common rights of any material consequence, and this perhaps explains the ease with which landholders and others purloined so much common property.

Many were the anomalies, but inclosure was rendered inevitable by the immense increase in population with the necessity for more intensive tillage. Speaking generally, the Inclosure Acts were designed to re-arrange the previously distributed slips of ploughland into compact acres more convenient for cultivation, or were intended to partition the wastes and grasslands to ensure their greater productivity.

By these means millions of acres of heath and common were converted into excellent arable and pasture. The days had departed when livestock were slaughtered on the approach of winter, and only those absolutely necessary for breeding purposes retained on the farm. For, until the opening years of the eighteenth century there was very little reserve fodder for

domestic animals during the dark season. To-day, clover, meadow-hay, oilcake, roots and other foods are available throughout the year. In the Middle Ages swedes and mangles were unknown in England, but these, with other valuable food-stuffs, were being made available in the eighteenth century.

The restoration of old roads and the construction of new ones; the draining of the fens and the growth of artificial grasses, with the cultivation of turnips and other roots, coincided with striking improvements in stock-raising. Land previously lying in fallow was now continuously cropped, and the additional products led to a marked increase in livestock, while the animal manure enriched the soil and made heavier the crops. De Foe suggests that Suffolk first adopted the improved methods, but Norfolk soon assumed the leadership, and many of the most eminent innovators in scientific farming were Norfolk men. The changes initiated in East Anglia ultimately influenced British husbandry as a whole, and down to the middle of the nineteenth century, the industrial population, despite its rapid increase was maintained on a high level of comfort and convenience by the products of the native soil.

With Jethro Tull's improvements in agricultural implements, the hoeing and weeding of cereal and other crops became possible, and those who utilized Tull's invention derived great benefit therefrom.

Before the eighteenth century, flocks, droves, and herds appear to have bred in very haphazard fashion. A Derbyshire landowner, Sir Thomas Gresley, seems the earliest recorded selector of farm-stock. Then Webster of Warwick, by means of judicious cross-breeding improved his cattle. Later came the renowned Robert Bakewell, who utilized a plan of artificial selection, which produced immensely improved horses, cattle and sheep. Bakewell's results attracted wide attention, and many sought the secrets of his success, but his methods he kept closely guarded. But his Longhorn cattle yielded prime beef, while his most notable achievement was the artificial evolution of choice varieties of sheep. That which the blind forces of Nature had failed to evolve in countless centuries, Bakewell created in his short lifetime. His famous flock had rude ancestry, whether it consisted in sheep of the early Leicester or Lincoln breed. Indeed, the old unselected Leicesters were mentioned by a recognized authority on rural economy so recently as 1784 as "a something between a sheep and a goat."

The mutton and the fleeces of Bakewell's flock proved of the highest refinement and quality. His rams were in constant request, and by 1770 his ramblings to other farmers brought an annual return of 5,000 guineas. Indeed, one of his rams, the famous "Two Pounder," earned as much as 800 guineas when lent for the breeding season.

Bakewell carefully shielded his flock from the contagion of alien blood. When he decided upon the perpetuation of an approved variety he selected another animal of kindred character for procreation. When he deemed it necessary for his purpose "the mating even of mother and son, father and daughter, brother with sister, mattered not at all." Bakewell evidently realized the risk of weakening desirable characters through promiscuous intercourse within his flock. His animals bred truly to type, and their strikingly improved qualities became hereditary. Moreover his precautionary methods not only fixed the types he desired, but apparently explain "the extraordinary rapidity with which he evolved them, which was particularly notable in his new Leicester sheep."

The remarkable breed of Longhorn cattle bred in Oxfordshire by Fowler was also the outcome of a systematic course of close breeding. But these Longhorns were swept aside when the far superior Short-

horns appeared. These last were common in the Northern counties, and were originally a very mongrel type indeed. Progressive farmers who were Bakewell's contemporaries became anxious for their cattle's improvement, but this they believed could only be accomplished by the introduction of new blood. Charles Colling, a Yorkshireman, shared this view, and having gained all he could from Bakewell, he determined to improve the cattle of his native county. He purchased the celebrated bull "Hubback," which became the male ancestor of the great Shorthorn family. Colling had always favoured cross-breeding when the astounding consequences of close inbreeding inadvertently brought about in Colling's herd completely convinced him of the scientific soundness of Bakewell's procedure. So his Shorthorn cattle were henceforth inbred as closely as Bakewell's and Fowler's Longhorns had been, and this with signal success. Colling's "Ketton Ox" scaled over 3,000 lb. at the age of four, while its weight subsequently reached 3,800 lb. Even to-day, the average weight of fat oxen ready for the butcher is not more than 1,200 lb.

Other breeds were then taken in hand. The North Devons, among others, were considerably increased in size and improved in quality, and the celebrated South Down sheep were developed. English horses, cattle, sheep, pigs and poultry have since supplied a large part of the civilized globe with a high proportion of its breeding animals. Indeed, it may be justly claimed that the labours of the agricultural innovators of the eighteenth century made possible the commercial and industrial supremacy which Britain retained until comparatively recent days.

T. F. PALMER.

Is the Old Testament Inspired?

From *About the Holy Bible*, by R. G. INGERSOLL.

If it is, it should be a book that no man—no number of men—could produce. It should contain the perfection of philosophy. It should perfectly accord with every fact in nature. There should be no mistakes in astronomy, geology, or as to any subject or science. Its morality should be the highest, the purest. Its laws and regulations for the control of conduct should be just, wise, perfect, and perfectly adapted to the accomplishment of the ends desired. It should contain nothing calculated to make man cruel, revengeful, vindictive, or infamous. It should be filled with intelligence, justice, purity, honesty, mercy, and the spirit of liberty. It should be opposed to strife and war, to slavery and lust, to ignorance, credulity, and superstition. It should develop the brain and civilize the heart. It should satisfy the heart and brain of the best and wisest. It should be true.

Does the Old Testament satisfy this standard?

Is there anything in the Old Testament—in history, in theory, in law, in government, in morality, in science—above and beyond the ideas, the beliefs, the customs and prejudices of its authors and the people among whom they lived? Is there one ray of light from any supernatural source?

The ancient Hebrews believed that this earth was the centre of the universe, and that the sun, moon, and stars were specks in the sky.

With this the Bible agrees.

They thought the earth was flat, with four corners; that the sky, the firmament, was solid—the floor of Jehovah's house.

The Bible teaches the same.

They imagined that the sun journeyed about the earth, and that by stopping the sun the day could be lengthened.

The Bible agrees with this.

They believed that Adam and Eve were the first man and woman; that they had been created but a few years before, and that they, the Hebrews, were their direct descendants.

This the Bible teaches.

If anything is, or can be, certain, the writers of the Bible were mistaken about creation, astronomy, geology; about the causes of phenomena, the origin of evil, and the cause of death.

Now, it must be admitted that if an Infinite Being is the author of the Bible, he knew all sciences, all facts, and could not have made a mistake.

If, then, there are mistakes, misconceptions, false theories, ignorant myths, and blunders in the Bible, it must have been written by finite beings; that is to say, by ignorant and mistaken men.

Nothing can be clearer than this.

For centuries the Church insisted that the Bible was absolutely true; that it contained no mistakes; that the story of creation was true; that its astronomy and geology were in accord with the facts; that the scientists who differed with the Old Testament were infidels and Atheists.

Now this has changed. The educated Christians admit that the writers of the Bible were not inspired as to any science. They now say that God, or Jehovah, did not inspire the writers of his book for the purpose of instructing the world about astronomy, geology, or any science. They now admit that the inspired men who wrote the Old Testament knew nothing about any science, and that they wrote about the earth and stars, the sun and moon, in accordance with the general ignorance of the time.

It required many centuries to force the theologians to this admission. Reluctantly, full of malice and hatred, the priests retired from the field, leaving the victory with science.

They took another position:

They declared that the authors, or rather the writers, of the Bible were inspired in spiritual and moral things; that Jehovah wanted to make known to his children his will and his infinite love for his children; that Jehovah, seeing his people wicked, ignorant, and depraved, wished to make them merciful and just, wise and spiritual, and that the Bible is inspired in its laws, in the religion it teaches, and in its ideas of government.

This is the issue now. Is the Bible any nearer right in its ideas of justice, of mercy, of morality, or of religion than in its conception of the sciences?

Is it moral? It upholds slavery—it sanctions polygamy. Could a devil have done worse? Is it merciful? In war it raised the black flag; it commanded the destruction, the massacre, of all—of the old, infirm, and helpless—of wives and babes.

Were its laws inspired?

Hundreds of offences were punished with death. To pick up sticks on Sunday, to murder your father on Monday, were equal crimes. There is in the literature of the world no bloodier code. The law of revenge—of retaliation—was the law of Jehovah. An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a limb for a limb.

This is savagery—not philosophy.

Is it just and reasonable? The Bible is opposed to religious toleration—to religious liberty. Whoever differed with the majority was stoned to death. Investigation was a crime. Husbands were ordered to denounce and to assist in killing their unbelieving wives. It is the enemy of Art. "Thou shalt make no graven image." This was the death of Art. Palestine never produced a painter or a sculptor.

Is the Bible civilized? It upholds lying, larceny, robbery, murder, the selling of diseased meat to strangers, and even the sacrifice of human beings to Jehovah.

Is it philosophical? It teaches that the sins of a people can be transferred to an animal—to a goat. It makes maternity an offence, for which a sin offering had to be made. It was wicked to give birth to a boy, and twice as wicked to give birth to a girl. To make hair-oil like that used by the priests was an offence punishable with death. The blood of a bird killed over running water was regarded as medicine.

Would a civilized God daub his altars with the blood of oxen, lambs, and doves? Would he make all his priests butchers? Would he delight in the smell of burning flesh?

Voltaire in England

II.

(Concluded from page 460)

THERE were apparently few celebrities in England with whom Voltaire did not contrive to become acquainted. Thomson he knew, and "discovered in him a great genius and a great simplicity." We wonder if he had heard the anecdote of his standing in his garden biting off the sunny side of a peach. Voltaire goes on to say, "I liked in him the poet and the true philosopher, I mean the lover of mankind. I think that without a good stock of such a philosophy, a poet is just above a fiddler who amuses our ears and cannot go to our soul." With Edward Young, the author of *Night Thoughts* and the *Cen-taur Not Fabulous*, he formed a friendship "which remained unbroken when the one had become the most rigid of Christian divines and the other the most daring of anti-Christian propagandists." Of Pope he was a great admirer, and as Desnoiresterres shows, the anecdote related by Johnson of his offending Pope's mother by the grossness of his conversation is probably mere calumny. Certain it is Pope continued on terms of courtesy if not of friendship, and sent to him a copy of his famous *Essay on Man*, inspired by their mutual friend Lord Bolingbroke. In his early days, Voltaire thought much of the optimism of the essay, but maturer thought, experience of the world and the Lisbon earthquake, produced *Candide*, that immortal satire on the theme "Whatever is, is right."

Having access to the best circles, the brilliant Frenchman made the most of his opportunities. His essays were published as an introduction to *La Henriade*, which he did not fail to advertise in a delicate fashion by saying the cuts were masterpieces of art. "'Tis the only beauty in the book that I can answer for." He appears to have sought subscribers personally. To Swift he writes: "May I beg you to use your influence in Ireland to procure some subscribers for *La Henriade*, which is finished, and which, for want of a little aid has not yet appeared. The subscription is only one guinea, payable in advance." Voltaire was evidently not one to hide his light under a bushel, or to go unnoticed for want of pushing. He always had two or three irons in the fire, and before one task was ended another was begun. *La Henriade* was a great success, going through three editions in a short period, and the money thus obtained formed the foundation of the large fortune which Voltaire accumulated, not by his writings, but by his ability in finance.

Voltaire's *Letters on the English* reads, at the present day, as so very mild a production, that it is difficult to understand why the Parliament of France should order its suppression. Yet it was a true instinct which detected that the work was directed against the principle of authority. The introduction of English thought was destined to become an explosive element shattering the feudalism of Europe. One educated in the current delusion that Voltaire was a mere mocker, will be surprised to find the temperate way in which he speaks of the Quakers. Here, where there was such excellent opportunity for railery, Voltaire shows he had a genuine admiration for their simplicity of life and their distaste for warfare. In these *Letters*, as in all his writings, he proves how far he was the embodiment of the new era by his bold expressed preference for industrial over military pursuits.

In his remarks on the Church of England, Voltaire, however, gives an unmistakable touch of his quality: "One cannot have public employment in England or Ireland without being of the number of the faithful

Anglicans. This reason, which is an excellent proof, has converted so many Nonconformists that not a twentieth part of the nation is out of the pale of the dominant Church."

After alluding to the "holy zeal" of ministers against dissenters, and of the lower house of Convocation, who "from time to time burnt impious books—that is, books against themselves"—he says: "When they learn that in France, young fellows noted for debauchery and raised to prelacy by the intrigues of women, openly make love, compose love-songs, give every day elaborate delicate suppers, then go to implore the illumination of the Holy Spirit, boldly calling themselves the successors of the Apostles—they thank God they are Protestants. But they are abominable heretics, to be burnt by all the devils, as Master François Rabelais says; and that is why I do not meddle with their affairs."

The Presbyterians fare little better, for Voltaire relates that when King Charles surrendered to the Scots they made that unfortunate monarch undergo four sermons a day.

It was, however, his admiration for English philosophy which was most startling to the French mind. He came here a poet, but he left a philosopher. Locke's Essay became his philosophical gospel. "For thirty years," he writes in 1768, "I have been persecuted by a crowd of fanatics because I said that Locke is the Hercules of Metaphysics, who has fixed the boundaries of the human mind." Newton, whose *Principia* he also introduced to his countrymen, was buried during Voltaire's visit to England. That at his funeral in Westminster Abbey the pall was borne by the Lord High Chancellor and other dignitaries, contributed to Voltaire's esteem of a country where Addison could become a Secretary of State and Prior and Gay plenipotentiaries. With Dr. Samuel Clarke, Newton's ablest disciple, and a liberal theologian to boot, he was on terms of intimacy. But what pleased him most in England was the freedom of discussion. A little before his arrival, Anthony Collins had published his *Discourse on the Grounds and Reason of the Christian Religion*, and the controversy raised by that work was still going on. During his visit, Thomas Woolston published his bold *Discourses on the Miracles*, in which the gospel narratives were, for the first time, ridiculed in England. Their success was great. Voltaire says that thirty thousand copies were sold. He writes with admiration: "I have seen four very learned treatises against the miracles of Jesus Christ, printed here with impunity, at a time when a poor bookseller was put into the pillory for publishing a translation of *La Religieuse en Chemise*." Alas! in the very month Voltaire left England (March, 1729), Woolston was tried and sentenced to one year's imprisonment and a fine of £100. Voltaire volunteered a third of the sum, but the brave prisoner refused to give an assurance that he would not offend again, and died in prison in 1733. Leslie Stephen gives countenance to the view that the Freethought martyr was mad. Voltaire, who understood somewhat better the circumstances of the time, always spoke of Woolston with the greatest respect.

During Voltaire's stay in England, he proposed to bring over a French theatre. He wrote to Paris, and a company of players came to London. They arrived with but little cash, and not finding the patronage they expected, soon departed. Voltaire gives a peculiar reason for the non-appreciation by the English of Molière's *Tartuffe*, the original of Mawworm if not of Uriah Heep. He says they are not pleased with the portrayal of characters they do not know. "One there hardly knows the name of the devotee, but they know well that of honest men. One does not see there imbeciles who put their souls into others'

hands, nor those petty ambitious men who establish a despotic sway over women formerly wanton and always weak, and yet over men more weak and contemptible. We fancy Voltaire must have seen society mainly as found among the Freethinkers. Certainly he could not give so favourable a verdict did he visit us now. The same remark applies to his statement that there was "no privilege of hunting in the grounds of a citizen, who, at the same time, is not permitted to fire a gun in his own field." But this, as well as the more important passage that "no one is exempted from taxation for being a nobleman or a priest," was possibly intended exclusively for the benefit of his compatriots.

It is certain, however, that Voltaire retained his esteem for England and the English to the last.

Goldsmith relates, thirty years after his return to France, that he was in his company one evening when the conversation turned upon England, and one of the company (Goldsmith says Fontonelle, but then he was nearly a century old) undertook to revile the English language and literature. Diderot defended them, but not brilliantly. Voltaire listened a long while in silence, which was, as Goldsmith remarks, surprising, for it was one of his favourite topics. But at last, about midnight—

Voltaire appeared roused from his reverie. His whole frame seemed animated. He began his defence with the utmost elegance mixed with spirit, and now and then he let fall his finest strokes of raillery upon his antagonist; and his harangue lasted until three in the morning. I must confess that, whether from national partiality or from the elegant sensibility of his manner, I never was more charmed, nor did I ever remember so absolute a victory as he gained in this dispute

Voltaire continued to correspond with his English friends to the latest period of his life. Among his correspondents were Lord and Lady Bolingbroke, Sir Edward Falkener, Swift, Hume, Robertson, Horace Walpole, George Colman and Lord Chatham. We find him asking Falkener to send him the *London Magazine* for the past three years. To the same friend he wrote from Potsdam in 1752, hoping that his *Vindication of Bolingbroke* was translated, as it would annoy the priests, "whom I have hated, hate, and I shall hate till doomsday." In the next year, writing from Berlin, he says: "I hope to come over myself in order to print my true works and to be buried in the land of freedom. I require no subscription, I desire no benefit. If my works are neatly printed and cheaply sold, I am satisfied."

To Thieriot he wrote: "Had I not been obliged to look after my affairs in France, depend upon it I would have spent the rest of my days in London." And again, long afterwards, in a letter to his friend Keate: "Had I not fixed the seat of my retreat in the free corner of Geneva I would certainly live in the free corner of England; I have been for thirty years the disciple of your ways of thinking." Mr. Collins says: "The kindness and hospitality which he received he never forgot, and he took every opportunity of repaying it. To be an Englishman was always a certain passport to his courteous consideration." When Martin Sherlock visited him at Ferney in 1776, he found the old man, then in his eighty-third year, still full of his visit to England. His gardens were laid out in English fashion, his favourite books were the English classics, the subject to which he persistently directed the conversation was the English nation.

In the land he loved so well the memory of Voltaire has been but scurvily treated. For over a century calumny and obloquy have been poured upon him. But it is at length being recognized that, with

all his imperfections, which were, after all, those of the age in which he lived, he devoted his brilliant genius to the cause of truth and the progress of humanity. The impartial student will not forget that he made his exile in England an occasion for accumulating those stores of intelligence with which he so successfully combated the prejudices of the past and promulgated the principles of freedom which justify his being ranked foremost among the liberators of the human mind.

(Reprinted.)

J. M. WHEELER.

Acid Drops

A vicar in charge of one of the London Churches tried an experiment on August 4. He invited holiday-makers to come to Church just as they were—in flannels or any other kind of holiday dress. He called it "Holiday Sunday," but people evidently took the expression too literally. They made it a holiday, from Church. The congregation consisted of two youths and two caretakers. The rest were on holiday.

The *Morning Post* which, with its clientele of retired naval and military men finds it impossible to visualize a world in which peoples are not engaged in periodic contests of brute force, says there has only been two attempts to create a universal peace. One was the Roman Empire, the other the Holy Roman Empire. It says these were "lofty attempts to create" a universal peace. The *Morning Post* must re-read its history. They were not attempts to create peace, but so far as they went, attempts to establish universal domination, one political, the other political and spiritual. Of course, if either had met with permanent success, war would have been abolished, because there would have been none to offer opposition, but to call these historic phenomena deliberate attempts to create universal peace is ridiculous. One might as well describe the efforts of British traders in Africa or India as deliberate attempts to create peace among the peoples of the two places. Any kind of unified rule tends to stop war between the different peoples who are ruled, but an incidental result and an attempt to produce that result are different and important things.

According to a statement issued by the Roman Catholic Bishop of Down, there have been 384 Roman Catholic families evicted from their homes in Belfast, and 1,648 rendered homeless in all parts of the city. A large number have also been prevented attending their usual work in the shipyards and factories. The figures are said to be incomplete. Now there is no question of any other cause at work here save religious bigotry. In this case it is Protestants oppressing Catholics. Elsewhere it is Roman Catholics oppressing Protestants. Apart from religion there is no special ground for this collective ill-feeling. And apart from this religious division the North and South of Ireland might comfortably work together as a united whole.

Having done their best to empty Germany of some of its best brains, the Fascists have created a fearful and wonderful biology of their own. The latest edict is to prohibit the use of lemons, because "only the products of the German soil can create German blood. Only from them derives that pulsation of the blood which with its effect upon body and soul determines our German character." This seems to go with the "Proletarian biology" and "proletarian psychology" of which we used to read. The next step in Germany should be the repudiation of Newtonian gravitation, as coming from an Englishman, and the rejection of the earth's motion round the sun because Copernicus was a Pole.

The Biblical injunction to kill "witches" and "wizards" is still looked upon by some religionists as a divine command; and one got a glimpse of the kind of thing that used to happen a few centuries back by the account of a recent trial in the Touraine district in France. It seems that a man named Jably was the "most dreaded

wizard in the country." It is not clear why he was dreaded, but it appears that he used to treat sick cows by piercing a bullock's heart with needles. As the cows recovered, this was a sure sign of witchcraft. He also managed to cure a man named Yenneguain of some ailment and what more conclusive proof of the dreaded "wizardry" could be brought forward than that? Mr. Yenneguain promptly killed the "wizard" who cured him and a storm of applause greeted his acquittal in the court of justice. Witches and wizards simply must be killed—so says the Bible. And no doubt Touraine will be hailed as a good Christian country. Poor Jably!

Another new book on Jesus is by Professor C. Guignebert—one of those die-hards who reject almost everything about Jesus in the New Testament except Jesus himself. M. Guignebert insists that "there is not the slightest doubt that Jesus never uttered the discourses attributed to him in the Gospels." So we have a Jesus, without a Virgin Birth, Miracles, and Resurrection, and even without the "discourses." But there is no doubt that Jesus must have lived!

A Catholic editor claims that "there is only one religion, and that is Catholicism, if by 'religion' is meant 'true religion.' In other words there is only one wholly true religion which contains the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth." That is some claim, and the people who believe it will believe anything. But, of course, that is just what they do.

There is going to be a "Medical Bureau" at Knock in Ireland. It seems that there is a celebrated shrine to "Our Lady" there in honour of her visit in person some years ago. Since then a number of "miraculous" cures have taken place and the Bureau is going to keep accurate records. Funny that "Our Lady" seems to have preferred Lourdes more than Knock, though. Why this favouritism? And why are 1,000 Dublinites with 35 hospital cases going to Lourdes instead of Knock? We give it up.

The almost complete absence of "cures" at Lourdes and the knowledge that this has to be explained not only to non-believers but to the unfortunate sick who make the pilgrimage, is responsible for a booklet prepared by the Archbishop of Birmingham. He carefully explains therein that it is quite erroneous to imagine that these pilgrimages are organized with a view to cure sick people. This is "an entirely false impression." Of course, "miracles have occurred at Lourdes," but pilgrims only go there "as an act of devotion to our Blessed Lady. She has asked that people should go as an act of penance, and the presence of the sick should be a cause of edification to other pilgrims." It must be wonderful to feel, if you know you are almost dying from cancer, consumption, diabetes, or some other terrible ailment, that your presence will be "a source of edification" to other pilgrims. Every invalid, and particularly the stretcher cases, must feel a heavenly elation. And how beautiful and divine is the Roman Catholic religion which expects its sick to be so utterly devoted!

The Rev. R. D. Fear, speaking at a recent anti-vivisection meeting, claimed that vivisection was "untrue to the great Head of the Church, Jesus Christ our Lord"—though he admitted that pretty nearly all the followers of "Our Lord" did not agree with him as most of them were strong supporters of vivisection. A writer in one of our national newspapers claimed that it was a sin to charge for admission to our great Cathedrals as this was strongly opposed to the "spirit" of "Our Lord's" teaching. No doubt other examples of his "teaching" can be brought forward by pious believers. For example, Italy is quite sure that "Our Lord" is entirely with her; while the Christian negro race generally would claim that he is heart and soul for Abyssinia. Meat-eaters and those who drink are sure Jesus is on their side, while vegetarians and abolitionists are sure he is their supreme champion. And so the merry game goes on.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE.

EDITORIAL

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Telephone No. : CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- H. HENRY.—Sorry your letter is crowded out—owing mainly to holiday pressure. But you have mistaken the point. The question is not whether majorities or minorities are right, but the right of a minority to argue its case and so convert itself into a majority. A dictatorship denies this right. Under a democracy a minority asks for no other right than that of being able to offer legitimate opposition by propaganda to whatever it believes to be wrong. A denial of this right is a denial of social freedom.
- J. CLAYTON.—It takes a great deal to make some people recognize the claims of *everyone* to equal freedom of thought and speech.
- J. MCKENNA.—The name National Secular Society merely indicates that it is an organization established in this country. But the Society has members all over the world, and even a few Branches. And there is nothing parochial in the title. In course of time a name becomes an asset, and it is wise not to lose sight of this fact. We quite appreciate your suggestion, nevertheless.
- T. B. LAWES.—London is always worth a visit, and you will be quite welcome at the office.
- SPENCER M. DEGOLIER.—Your friend the priest was not in error. The Roman Church does not forbid the use of reason; it claims that its teachings rest on reason, and that reason "rightly used" justifies religion. As we have so often had to point out, the distinction between the believer in religion and a disbeliever is a matter of logic. By logical reasoning religion can be shown to be wrong, but one need not decri the use of reason to arrive at illogical conclusions or to set out from unwarranted premises.
- G. THOMAS.—Quite a good passage, and shall be used.
- N. O' L. (Dublin).—Mr. Cohen will be pleased to see you when you come to London. Naturally local Freethinking organizations have their ups and downs, but the principal thing is that the movement as a whole sweeps on.
- C. E. GOUGH.—The Bishop of Winchester's denunciation of Spiritualism is amusing. It is decidedly a case of the pot reproaching the kettle for its colour.
- D. L. DUNFEMLINE.—It is part of a concerted endeavour to introduce the *Freethinker* to new readers. Your name has been sent by one who did not know that you already subscribed. Expect you may find other readers in your locality if you look round.
- R. LECHMERE.—We believe the author of the letter, which deserves the praise given, is already a reader of this journal.
- J. BROADLEY.—We are pleased to hear of the success of Mr. Clayton's meeting at Preston, and hope you will be successful in forming a Branch. Preston is not an easy place for Freethought propaganda, but the greater the difficulties, the greater the honour gained.
- S. MORTON.—You need not have expressed the hope that we should not feel hurt at your abuse. We can assure you we were not, but we were sorry it lacked the wit to amuse or the cogency to interest. Try again.
- For Distributing and Advertising the *Freethinker*.—Mrs. J. Vakil, 4s.
- 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. Roselli, giving as long notice as possible.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

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

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

The Howard League has done some very excellent work in the direction of prison reform and in the more humane treatment of the criminal, and we are glad to see that it has declined to take part in the Congress of the International Penal and Penitentiary Commission that is to be held in Berlin next month. The Congress is to be held under the control of the German Fascists, and the Howard League has been informed that if their chairman, Mr. D. N. Pritt, K.C., is appointed as delegate he will not be allowed to speak. There is to be no freedom of speech, there will be no freedom of reports, and the only accounts of the Congress that will be permitted to be published will be those approved by German Fascists. In these circumstances the Howard League wisely decided to take no part in the farce.

We should like to see other bodies follow this example—particularly in the case of sport. At present it is officially announced that in all sport competitions no one who is not a member of the Fascist Party will be permitted to win a prize. This also applies to scholastic competitions and examinations. The publicly announced successful students and competitors are not the best scholars or the best players, but only the best the Fascist Party can produce. In this way, what with beatings and assassinations and driving the best brains out of the country, it is to be hoped to create a generation made up of Hitlers and Goerings, and the like. Germany, which once held one of the foremost places in the world in intellectual matters, is thus doomed, if the present rule continues, to sink lower and lower in the moral and intellectual scale. *If the present rule continues?* But Germany is, after all, a nation of many millions, and one must beware of judging the whole of the German people by the gang that at present terrorizes the nation. And all the German school children are taught to say, "My country is the best in the world."

The criticisms of the *Times Literary Supplement* are nothing if they are not "respectable," and we have often warned people never to take its criticisms of advanced works at their face value. It is unfortunate that England should be without a first-class and independent literary weekly, and so one takes in the *Supplement* merely to get a knowledge of what new books are published—and then tries to get those which it strongly condemns. So we are not surprised at the *Supplement* being rather shocked at the plain language of Mr. Hornibrook's *Without Reserve*, (noticed in these columns last week) because he does not speak very respectfully of war-mongers, stupid military commanders, the Church and its warlike clergy, and the indecent-minded moralists who opposed prophylactic measures in the Army. Those who know the *Times Literary Supplement* will not be surprised. For our part we prefer the judgment of Mr. H. G. Wells that *Without Reserve* is "first rate stuff," and share his hope that its sale "will run to scores of thousands." The work is published by Heinemann's at 7s. 6d.

A lady, Mrs. Spens, in making a pathetic appeal to women to come in and become Anglo-Catholics, declared that "our religion is so dreadfully unintelligent, we are so incapable of giving a reason for the faith that is within us." But surely if her religion is so "unintelligent," that is a sufficient reason why it is impossible to explain why one is religious? But we congratulate Mrs. Spens on putting the matter so very clearly. Her religion is really "unintelligent"—and "unintelligible" in the bargain.

Reason and Violence

II.

THE relation of Christianity to War is matter of contention alike among believers and heretics. On the strength of a few passages from their Scripture, arbitrarily chosen, some Christian sects have asserted their incompatibility and upheld a doctrine of non-resistance to force. Broadly regarded there is no such defined antithesis. This Scripture, in its historic records, presents ruthless war operations by the Chosen People under the direction of Deity. Its Psalms contain many chapters breathing out threatenings and destruction to enemies. Christian soldiers have found earnest piety consist with a vigorous discharge of military duty. Cromwell's Ironsides, as the dawn broke at Dunbar, sang with fervour the Psalm, "O Lord arise and let thine enemies be scattered" before charging well home. It strengthens the lethal arm to feel "the Lord" is on your side. The Church militant has never had any qualms about war for its own ends. A national Church, like the Anglican, is open to the charge of sharing responsibility with the State for its actions in war or peace—a point of importance in the relation of the spiritual and temporal powers in state organisation, ideally regarded. All the same, with the virtual secularisation of modern life and government, the "Beatitudes" have had little part in the shaping of policy.

Until quite recent times war has been looked upon as a normal factor in the relations and rivalries of different nations. Efforts were at length made to soften some of its harsher features, and doubts began to arise as to its utility as a mode of arbitrament. Here the influence of the spirit of rationalism has been decidedly beneficent. Being concerned with cultural and scientific progress it was necessarily adverse to barbaric survivals and sentiment. Free discussion and conference—the rule of reason—as a means of arriving at scientific and philosophic truth was equally applicable to the solution of material problems and difficulties; where intellectual approach would replace recourse to crude physical decisions. In this country, commercial Liberalism in the 19th century supported these principles, which saw in the free commercial intercourse of different peoples the guarantee of peaceful association. Who would wish to quarrel with their best customers? The English philosophic school also favoured population limitation as mitigating one of the natural incitements to war—uncontrolled multiplication. Japan is a present-day portent.

The response from abroad to such ideas was not enthusiastic. The movements of national unification of the mid-century, aided by military action, reinforced a militarist doctrine of policy and expansion of forces to maintain these achievements; and economic protectionism as their material support. As a concession to popular feeling and opinion, the theocratic empires, as they stood before the Crisis, had tempered their absolutism with limited parliamentary institutions, and Russia was experimenting in the same direction. Meanwhile, subversive factors had appeared on the Continent associated with the theory of Socialism in its various schools, which had developed from the early decades of the century in reaction against a growing industrialism under the "capitalist system." Its exponents looked largely to force as a means to their goal—to throwing bombs rather than to casting votes; and their doctrine was tinged with anti-religious and "atheistic" sentiment, as in the slogan, "Neither God nor Master." An early apostle of destruction was the Russian, Bakunin, who torpedoes the State and Deity at the same time, and all notion of reconstructing government. One is reminded here of an old cartoon where two "Nihilists" contemplate a world in ruins. Says one, "Well, we've destroyed everything: what now remains?" . . . "Why, there's the planet. Let's spring that!"

More organised in its purpose, but similar in its explosive tactics, with "red" for its symbol, is the

form of Communism, identified with the German, Marx. This is ante-dated by other Communist systems, like that of Fourier, but differs in its *modus operandi*.³ It has become prominent by a factitious connection with Russian affairs—though its spirit is alien to the Russian genius. During the chaos of the collapse of the Tsardom, a band of fanatical Marxists seized power by a *coup d'état*, and have retained it by terrorist methods dealt out impartially to all "counter-revolutionaries," socialist, or otherwise. It is anti-Christian on the ground that religion is the opium of the people and a buttress to the capitalist order. The "Soviet" publish cartoons depicting Christ, in the manner of the Russian ikon, leading a body of capitalists, followed by a horde of "wage-slaves" in chains.

Poor Jesus. Among the many guises in which this enigmatic figure appears, to be made responsible for certain economic arrangements at a period in Europe two thousand years after his assumed existence!

Not content with making Russia the victim of their experiment, the Moscow Camarilla are eager to extend their benefactions to other countries. This is by way of a world revolution. Dividing the industrial world up into "proletariat" and "bourgeoisie" (whoever they may be) the proletarians are to overthrow the bourgeois and their governments by armed force and usher in the Communist Utopia. In a manifesto of the Third International—the militant agency of the Soviet—it is declared: "The imperialist war, which pitted nation against nation has passed, and is passing into the civil war which lines up class against class. Socialist criticism has sufficiently stigmatized the bourgeois world order. The task of the International Communist Party is now to overthrow this order and to erect in its place the structure of the Socialist world order. . . . The outcry of the bourgeois world against civil war and the Red Terror is the most colossal hypocrisy of which the history of political struggles can boast. Civil war is forced upon the labouring classes by their arch enemies. The Communist parties, far from conjuring up civil war artificially, rather strive to shorten its duration as much as possible; in any case it has become an iron necessity; to minimise the number of its victims, and, above all, to secure victory for the proletariat. This makes necessary the disarming of the bourgeoisie at the proper time, the arming of the labourer, and the formation of the Communist army as a protector of the rule of the proletariat, and the inviolability of the social structure. Such is the Red Army of Soviet Russia, which arose to protect the achievements of the working class against every assailant from within and without. The Soviet Army is inseparable from the Soviet State. . . ."

This must be heartening to pacifist admirers here of the Soviet. Once established, the "Comintern" was soon in the field to extend its machinations, and there followed civil war and disturbance in Germany, Hungary, Italy and elsewhere. But "dictatorship of the proletariat" did not meet with a general hearty welcome. The Bolsheviek movement was countered and overthrown in each case, to be succeeded, not by freedom, but by dictatorship of another kind in various forms. Hence arose hostile Fascismo⁴ in Italy, which took possession of the State and has established an autocratic partisan régime which re-affirms the solidarity of the National State under the direction of a particular doctrine. If not anti-catholic (for it has aimed to keep on good terms with the Papacy) it is secular, anti-democratic, and under the inspiration of its leader, Mussolini, has revived the militarist spirit in an intensified mode beginning with the schools. It

³ Account must be taken in estimating Socialism at large of the wide divisions between its several schools over modes of achieving their aims. Between evolution and resolution; between a centralized state mechanism and autonomous local groups, uniting in a free federation, etc. The *Bolsheviki* (literally the majority section of one particular Russian party) exhibit as much virulence in their manifestoes towards all other sects, as towards the "enemy."

⁴ Linking with the Roman *fascis* a bundle of rods bound round the helve of an axe, and carried before the magistrate as a badge of authority.

insists that the most glorious thing is to be a trained soldier vowed to uphold national greatness and power, and invokes to this end the tradition of Imperial Rome.

The greatest reaction from Bolshevism is in Germany. After the Armistice, in the then depressed state of the country, there was a sharp struggle for power between the Republican parties and "Spartacists." Since then an agitation has gone forward known as Nazi-ism, that is, National Socialism (the Socialist element is usually ignored by its critics) which is now in the saddle. It is bitterly opposed to Communism, which has been crushed: and it is inspired by a cult of force, anti-Christian and anti-Jewish, exaltation of race, the totalitarian State, the glorification of military discipline and valour, as in Italy, but in a more mystical sense—in the spirit set forth in Carlyle's lecture on Odin. Hence a conflict between the Church and this new "Paganism" as it is dubbed. It is reviving old German tradition and custom, and last Easter was celebrated on these lines as the "Spring Resurrection"; and we are told of children taking part therein to acclaim the coming power of the German Faith, which was faith in the Reich, under the red flag of the racial revolution of Adolf Hitler, and the blue Viking flag of the revolution of the German soul.

All these things are of grave import in themselves, and in their bearing on rational social philosophy, and invite further attention.

AUSTEN VERNEY.

Israel Poldu

MR. ISRAEL POLDU was a Methodist. He was also a hypocrite, but the connexion between his Methodism and his hypocrisy was known only to the mysterious organism which he was wont to refer to as his soul.

Over the huge double bed which Mr. Poldu had shared for some thirty years with his patient wife there hung a text, "The Lord will Provide"; but Mr. Poldu, who kept a shop in the little Cornish village of Penlooe, was never content to let the Lord do all the providing. Although he had a practical monopoly in the village of such varied types of goods as radio sets, sweetmeats, and petrol, he was not content. He disliked Miss Treilico, the postmistress, for she had a thriving trade in stationery which would otherwise have come Israel's way. So he advised all the villagers to do their stamp-buying at the nearest town, so that Miss Treilico might be prevented from earning the small commission on the sale of stamps which would otherwise be hers.

Naturally, such a paragon of all the virtues as Mr. Poldu was a good Christian: naturally he worshipped twice each Sunday at the dismal Methodist Church: and naturally he abhorred all infidels, counting them nearly as bad as the Roman Catholics, for whom he thought fit no fate could be too hard.

And if there were a suspicion of heresy among the members of the Methodist fraternity, it was always Mr. Poldu who smelt it out. If the new Minister, unmarried, showed a disposition to frequent the company of some maiden of the village, it was always Mr. Poldu who told the Minister that the maidens of Penlooe were no better than they should be. If a new Vicar of the village Church wanted to make the Church services more attractive, it was always Mr. Poldu who told the Methodist congregation that "this man would do more harm than they expected," although he would hurriedly explain that Church and Chapel folk were not enemies.

On one occasion, when a stranger pointed out that his attitude towards the missionary activities of the Church of England was precisely the same as his week-day attitude towards a rival in business who might steal trade from him, Mr. Poldu was genuinely

shocked. "Turn the house of God into a business!" he thought. "What a disgusting suggestion!" Which is why one may say that Mr. Poldu was a hypocrite, for there is no hypocrite more nauseating than the hypocrite who does not realize his hypocrisy.

In the village, naturally, Mr. Poldu was looked up to by the villagers. Monetary success brings its own reward in admiration. But in his inmost heart Israel was not altogether satisfied. He felt that things were getting worse. Admittedly, he was making a good income out of the shop, and his son, driven to chapel by the fear of chastisement, was blossoming forth into a really successful, because really ignorant, local preacher. That was so, and Mr. Poldu rejoiced in the thought. But the collections were slowly declining, and the congregations, in spite of the fact that there are few exciting counter-attractions on a Sunday evening, were declining also. God was losing ground. It was all very sad. What could Israel Poldu do about it?

It was when his thoughts were in this critical state that young Parkinson came to Penlooe. Now Parkinson was a thinker: he had read widely in all kinds of literature, and he was completely unorthodox in his ideas. He had written a good many essays, which had been well received in the press, and he had in mind a novel of Cornish village life. With the idea of putting this into shape, he came to Penlooe one day in early Summer. And his reputation had preceded him, for Israel Poldu was a diligent reader of the more lurid kind of Sunday paper, and one Sunday, between a spicy article about the latest divorce scandal and a bloodthirsty account of a famous murder trial, he had seen a Methodist minister's account of Sidney Parkinson as a man who deserved to be burned.

Israel smiled a trifle grimly when he heard who the visitor was. He would show him! God had played into Israel's hands, delivered the enemy over to him to be dealt with in the good old way. "These Atheists," he said to his wife one night, "may be able to do what they like to in the Godless cities. They can't do it here. We'll show 'em what we think about their devilish unbelief!" And so the word was passed around among the faithful. Young Parkinson was not to be allowed to pervert the foolish and errant folk of Penlooe: maidens who might be attracted by the roving eye of a professed Atheist were to be kept out of the way: boys who would otherwise be led to drink and gambling and all other sins the flesh is heir to, were to be placed under strict control. And those older people who, in Israel's opinion, might be trusted to look after themselves, were to be left to snub the young man until he left the village in disgust.

Everything panned out as Israel had expected. Young Parkinson, when he walked across the village green, was watched by everyone, but when he approached some one person, with a view to asking his way or finding out when the next 'bus ran to the town, he was met by a stormy glare—and silence. He found it somewhat disconcerting, and mine host at the village inn, where he was staying, could not enlighten him. This did not last long, however. Soon Parkinson found out the reason for this ostracism, and he laughed.

For a week he stuck it out, but the stoniest of glares gets worn out after a time, and then conversation followed. The villagers found that this young man was really anxious to get to know them, and so deal with them as pleasantly as possible. It was a strange metamorphosis. They found him a good friend to all who were in need, and then they came into the bar of "The Cornish Arms" and listened to him discoursing on all sorts of subjects.

It was an education for the village, and it took some

months of intensive work by the Methodists before that education was rendered useless again, after the departure of the visitor. But on the day that Parkinson departed, Israel Poldu went on his knees beside his bed and thanked his God for having driven this infidel from out their midst. And then, as he clambered into bed, he pondered. Should he ask old Mother Penhaligon ten per cent or fifteen per cent for that pound which she wanted to borrow to pay the rent?

JOHN ROWLAND.

In Laburnum Street

I daresay you know Laburnum Street. There are about four hundred houses in it, all of one type, and their external appearance is unattractive. There is not one laburnum. Where the street joins the main road, there is one very large corner house with a respectable amount of garden, about 20 rooms and a design which does not displease.

I shall violate, for higher purposes, the accepted maxim that an Englishman's house is his castle. Come with me into number 24 and meet Mr. John Brown, jobbing gardener, who counts amongst his blessings, a wife, two children and an education of sorts. He has opinions on many things. As he expresses them, they are rarely lucid, sometimes terse and generally emphatic. He has his likes and dislikes in literature, in music, in sport—just indeed as he has in victuals—and what he *likes* he advocates. He has fancies as well in the matter of religion. He is Church of England. It would be an injustice to Brown to suggest that there had been some connection between his spiritual choice and the fact that the owners of gardens are very frequently Church of England. In any matter that requires thought Brown is not impressive; generally he has gravitated into a standpoint, or more correctly, as regards opinions he has found himself to be the subject of endowments. Although he occasionally meets people of differing ideas (in spite of his instinctive efforts to avoid them), how on earth they have become possessed of them he always "fails to understand." As a jobbing gardener, however, one discovers that Brown becomes worth listening to. He knows his subject and has had an uncommon amount of practical experience. So much experience has he had that he rejects as "old wives' tales" nearly all the horticultural wisdom of his neighbours and his less informed co-workers. In short, he sticks to facts, collects them, collates them, and proceeds to fairly sound generalisations. He sees the value of the process in this field of investigation only. He would be surprised, perhaps annoyed, if you were to call him, in this respect, scientific, for science to him is connected with high-browism and he hates the high-brows as the devil hates holy water.

In Number 36 lives Frank Robinson, possessed of not identical but similar blessings, who makes up the ledger in a soap manufactory. Robinson and Brown have points of difference. He likes Sullivan's music, whilst Brown can only rise to jazz. He likes Dickens whereas Brown never rises beyond the evening paper. In religion he is a Primitive Methodist and can give a few sentiments, which sound like reasons, in favour of that particular sect; but the real reasons, of course, is that Frank's papa and mamma were Primitive Methodists. He is Labour in politics, whilst Brown is Conservative. In food, his pet aversion is bananas, while Brown detests caraway seeds. Brown and Robinson are, in fact, opposed on very many matters. It is one of the reasons why they are not seen in each other's company. You may say this is a pity as what they both need is interchange of ideas. This is more than doubtful. They do not know how to chat. They simply "fail to understand" how the other can be so prejudiced. Even in the matter of bananas and caraway seeds this surprise exists. Their idea of discussion is vociferation and reiteration. The most powerful factor that keeps them apart is, however, the "class" bias, a bias which can have a solid basis on the curious fact that one wears a perpetually clean coat whilst the other wears an occasionally clean coat. Both would deny the possession of such an unworthy emotion; but then, they would automatically deny anything which presented themselves to themselves in an unsatisfactory light.

In the corner mansion lives Mr. Murchison, a gentleman who has made money by selling to Brown, Robinson and others, a non-alcoholic beverage, with distinct alcoholic

virtues. There has been nothing wrong, as the world understands it, with Mr. Murchison's education. He has acquired the usual polite and useful accomplishments, including even a little Latin, a little science and a little formal logic. With his opinions, however, he has found himself endowed just as have his humbler neighbours, and he puts them forward in much the same way. Perhaps his distaste for substantiation is even greater than theirs' for it can be taken for granted that a successful business man can never talk *nonsense* and an addiction to voice raising and table banging in lieu of ratiocination can surely be forgiven a man who has proved his wisdom in the best of all ways. Mr. Murchison also has a marked class bias which divides him from the rest of Laburnum Street, but he has a surprising amount in common. They are all, for instance, good patriots in the common acceptance of the term. In the hour of the country's danger, you know where you will find them. The possession of sound patriotism is a boon and a blessing in a thousand ways. It enables them all to come to quick decisions on multitudes of happenings without mental effort. When it has to be adjudged whether a Britisher has been guilty of sabotage in Russia or whether British or American bridge is the better game, or whether the type of bowling as practised by the English cricket team in Australia was justifiable, the answer is automatic. If a foreigner is accused of murdering an Englishwoman, Brown, Murchison and Robinson are sufficiently spiritual: akin to know, as soon as the charge is made, that "the dago has done it right enough." Similarly with regard to the things of the mind; they all distrust the "highbrow." Murchison inclines to Brown on the subject of music rather than to Robinson. But they all dislike Symphonies and chamber music and rubbish of that sort. They would be quite ready to confess to each other if they ever did meet that those who do like these things are humbugs, guilty of laughable affectation, which they, sensible men, can see through. Differences in religion (Murchison is a Congregationalist; his great-grandfather was a man of some prominence, he has been informed, in that body), they can make some allowance for (their dosage in all cases being fortunately a weak one), but as for those fellows who go too far and say there's no God and that kind of thing, well, they feel themselves in full agreement with Mr. Beverley Nicholls. They don't like those books and plays about men running away with other men's wives and wives getting tired of their husbands—this "sex stuff." "What I like after a hard day's work," say Mr. Murchison, and Mr. Robinson, and Mr. Brown, "is something light and jolly, not these so-called problem plays and indecent novels." So they read the *Sunday Chronicle*; and the musical comedy with the most thinly clad feminine chorus gets their patronage, though, of course, class bias asserts itself once more at the theatre entrance where they shake themselves out into their respective pens. And they all have a pet hatred. With Brown, it is the Jews; Robinson, the Americans; Murchison, "those Russian fellows," but nowhere is their hatred so whole-hearted as when directed against any kind of idea new to the herd.

"We measure the excellences of other men by some excellency we conceive to be in ourselves." So wrote the wise old Selden, and by that key we can understand much about not only the dwellers in Laburnum Street but about ourselves. The inhabitants of Laburnum Street know their numerous excellences only too well. Though not so obvious to outsiders, to themselves they stick out like water melons. Outside of Laburnum Street they are promptly and plainly written off as bundles of prejudice, prepossession, egotism and emotion and their so-called judgments, being but the expression of these, are, consequently, warped and useless. Even he who is conscious of this, not only in the case of Laburnumites, but in his own case, can be sure that he doesn't make sufficient allowance for the fact. Even the exceptional man can only approximately attend to all the weeding necessary in his own circumstances. It is an understatement to say that there is a bit of Laburnum Street in the best of us; there is a *very great deal*. It is this job of self-examination to which every person who takes a proper pride in himself must settle down sooner or later. The sooner the better, for the longer the process is delayed the more difficult does the task become.

T. H. E.

I wish to stop once and for all the inflated language about the unique perfection of Christ and his teachings, which is used not to denote an imaginary Christ of pious sentiment, but the historical Christ as depicted in the gospels. This is a fatal error which must be uprooted if either religion or morality is to be saved and placed on solid foundations.—*Rev. C. Voysey.*

Freethought in Prague

Manifestations for democracy and free schools, against clericalism and fascism, were held in Prague on July 5, 6 and 7, 1935, by the three largest free thought organizations in Czechoslovakia, that is, the "Czechoslovak Free Thinkers," the "Union of Socialist Free Thinkers" and the "Union of the German Proletarian Free Thinkers."

Progressive teachers as well as the organization of Czechoslovak Legionnaires who fought in the Allied armies during the World War for the independence of Czechoslovakia, joined the demonstrations prepared by the three groups named above.

On July 6 all three organizations met and agreed upon a united programme against reactionists. Dr. M. Terwagne, president of the International Union of Free Thinkers, also representing the Free Thinkers of Belgium, and J. E. Dapper, for the Free Thinkers of Holland, came to Prague for the conferences.

The speakers were: Dr. L. Milde, vice-president of the Czechoslovak Free Thinkers, who spoke on world views of the Free Thinker; R. Lebenhart, secretary of the German organization of Free Thinkers in Czechoslovakia, on catholicism and atheism; Mr. Herynk, teacher, on free and independent schools; and Editor Martinek, on future work of free thought and anti-catholic movements.

The delegates of all three organizations then unanimously accepted several resolutions pertaining to a united front against political and cultural reaction and for separation of church and State, introduction of secularism in schools, removal of clerical influence in schools, abolition of all clerical schools, introduction of higher education for teachers; in the event that separation of church and State cannot be accomplished immediately, absolute civic equality for all non-religious citizens which would be possible only by abolishing clerical matrix, religious oaths in courts, removal of clergy from the army, and requiring a tax on all religious sects during the time that the State renders financial support to such sects.

On the following day large demonstrative parades were held in Prague, which were a direct reply of the advanced population of Czechoslovakia to the catholic congress held in Prague a week previously. In the parades, enlivened by many bands, various standards proclaiming the requirements of the Free Thinkers were carried. For example: Not Charity but Social Equality—Not Doles but Work—Not Paradise after Death but a Decent Living Here for All—Free Thinkers of Czechoslovakia, You are a Million, Organise—The Radio is not a Church, Abolish Broadcasting of Masses—Poverty is a Virtue, Claim Those Who Have Enough—Three Kings of Reactionism, Clericalism, Capitalism, Fascism—Place the Radio in the Service of Progress—Prevent Horrible Pressure on the Dying, Remove Priests and Nuns from Hospitals—We Want a Separation of Church and State—Let Him Who Needs a Priest Pay Him—Belief in Hell, Hope in Capitalism, Love of Money is Upheld by Clericalism.

Enormous streams of demonstrating Free Thinkers and progressive teachers filled Prague. The parade of thousands attracted great attention and was warmly greeted by the public. It was a demonstration of more than 40,000 people. This mass poured into the historical square of the Old Town, on which stands the statue of John Huss, the martyr for free thought.

With unanimous agreement was read the proclamation that all progressive citizens will defend the democratic character of the Czechoslovak Republic, that they will fight to establish their progressive ideals as proclaimed by the Free Thinkers and that they will bravely stand against all reactionists who work for the overthrow of liberty, which is the foundation of the Czechoslovak State and which is represented by the great President, T. G. Masaryk.

The manifestations called forth much public interest and understanding of the Press. The progressive elements in Czechoslovakia, which is surrounded by non-democratic states, aroused a great majority of the nation to fight for social equality, for democracy and for free thought.

The organizations of Free Thinkers in Czechoslovakia are extremely active. It is to be expected that the International Congress of Free Thinkers, which will be held in 1936, will be most successful. After all, it will be a congress held in the capital of a country called the Island of Liberty in Central Europe. A manifestation such as that of the Free Thinkers held in Prague would not be possible in any other city in the greater part of Europe.

Bottom Dogs

AMERICA is a curious place, and its fiction can be divided into two distinct kinds. There is the fiction which depicts the United States as a paradise where the streets are paved with dollars, and there is the fiction of Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Lewis, and Edward Dahlberg, which shows that the prosperity of the rich Americans is the veneer which covers a mass of seething misery.

Edward Dahlberg's *Bottom Dogs* has just been published by Putnam's at 7s. 6d., with an introduction by D. H. Lawrence.

It is difficult to describe the book. It is hardly a novel for it has no end, and the second half is hardly concerned with the central figure. It is not an essay, for everything is set down in a cold, relentless manner without any striving for effect.

It is what certain kinds of journalists would describe as a human document. D. H. Lawrence goes so far as to suggest that the moral of *Bottom Dogs* is that mankind stinks, and indeed one is oppressed all through with the sense of revulsion away from people.

The story very briefly concerns the boyhood and youth of a certain Lorry, and shows what kind of people he met, and what kind of things he did.

Lorry's mother sent him to an orphanage, a terrible place where the coldness of the walls enters even into the reader's bones.

At the orphanage the hospital was well patronized on Sunday mornings by fellows who wished to avoid prayer in hall.

They could not avoid morning prayer, but "A short prayer" was done, and then started the scraping of chairs, plates, tin plates enamelled white, tin spoons, or the yell of some fella in a corner: "Hey, you crook, don't go changing plates with me. Want a sock in the eye!"

The morning prayer was evidently of little avail, indeed, the author tells us that "prayer hall was like rat poison to the bigger guys."

There is a screamingly funny bit, with an underline of tragedy in it, of a fella who was reading "He who gives is more blessed than he who receives." At that moment the head of the orphanage struck him and knocked him unconscious. When he came round he had been unconscious so long that the boys said the physician had taken out his appendix, his tonsils, and his mumps. But let Dahlberg continue: "After that he became very bitter. Said God had laughed at him when he was praying for help. He could never get that line out of his head; he said it was sure rite; but it took the religion out of him; he said the Lord had pointed it out to rub it in. Well, he never came to no good. He was later expelled from the home for selling all the hymn and prayer books in the chapel to a second-hand dealer for a dime, and some irreligious pamphlets by a guy who made Ingersoll watches."

Dahlberg's book is anti-religious all the way through, so that this quotation is not a compliment to religion: it is a forcible piece of satire.

Later on Lorry becomes friendly with a girl who has turned Christian Scientist, and who sold Bibles in her spare time.

By using the arguments of Mary Eddy Baker (whom the girl was always preaching) Lorry is able to make an attempt upon her virtue. The censor would not allow the extract to be printed here, but the book is for everyone to read.

Lorry finally arrives at Los Angeles, where he puts up at the Y.M.C.A. It is difficult to believe that the frequenters of the Y.M.C.A. are so evil-living as the author makes out. Not because it is a Y.M.C.A. There is no reason at all why men living at Y.M.C.A. quarters should be better than men living at an ordinary hostel or hotel, but it is difficult to believe that any group of men could be so rotten as those whom Lorry meets.

There is a special chapter on the after Bible coffee class. "Of course there was no getting round it, Doctor Dithmuth, who was the house physician, was as dry as boiled radishes in his sermons, still there was Alec Baynton with his well polished cornet that sort of it set it off just when the junior members were getting sweaty about the groins."

Most of the members attended because of the feeds, and several of them were caught committing crimes of various kinds, so that the class cannot be said to have been of a great benefit.

One of the big pots, a booster in campaign funds for new buildings for the Y.M.C.A., was found to have committed a particularly odious crime, and the Y.M.C.A. promptly kicked him out, and put in the local paper an advertisement to the effect that blackguards crept into all organizations. Not a word of Christian forgiveness or receiving a black sheep into the fold again.

The picture given of the life of a bottom dog in the States is a black one. The book is not cheering reading, but all who would know how other people live, and all who would know something of all kinds of life must get the book and read it.

NECHELLS.

The Eternal Brake

Whenever man seeks to alleviate his "lot," to improve the world for his own and his children's benefit, his mental progress is barred by organised religion. Paradoxical though it may be to an ardent Christian of whatever denomination, the freeing of men and women from the yoke of poverty and oppression runs directly contrary to religious teaching. Practically all religions teach the doctrine of suffering, of being content and of enduring. Extreme politics are always anti-church.

Cynics and the casual hearer of the street corner orator immediately dismiss the blasphemy with "Oh, ignore these people, they are anti-everything and cry 'Down with this and that' from mere pique."

They delude none but themselves. The Church and particularly a State-aided Church, has always been a powerful ally of oppression and of the status quo.

In the history of man's struggle towards a better world, towards his emancipation and betterment, is there one item for which the Church can take credit? The answer is most obviously none!

A speaker on the wireless recently gave it as his opinion that a religious revival will come, but it will not involve a return to mid-Victorian principles; it will be progressive, evenly revolutionary, he said. No more outworn dogmas but a live religion that will re-capture the lost support, is promised the faithful who live long enough to see.

His next remark was enlightening. "Man will seek his material betterment through spiritual advancement."

How optimistic was he? And how wrong! Ask the poor unemployed man in the dole queue about spiritual advancement when he wonders where his next meal is coming from. When the belly is full and the material wants suitably cared for, then and not until then, will the time be ripe and the stage set, if ever, for the spiritual revival and advancement.

If every man, woman and child in Great Britain became regular and enthusiastic church-goers to-morrow, would that help one iota towards the attainment of that degree of material betterment that is so sadly lacking?

Compile a little table to see just how the Church has helped mankind on its way.

Education was in the hands of the Church for centuries but it was not until the State took the matter in hand some fifty years ago that real education can be said to have commenced. In priest-ridden countries to this day, the Church's power lies in the ignorance of the populace who can get education only from the priests who impart just what they think is good and no more.

Remember, only a few years ago, how the Church frowned on the new Sunday and open-air week-end habit; no recreation for the masses, three services daily and some Bible reading thrown in was its precept for a Christianlike Sunday.

The "war" between the Church and Science is too well known to need comment; science means knowledge and power; it conflicts with archaic doctrines and lifts primitive man from the rut. He no longer has to endure, no longer has to live by the sweat of his brow or to suffer abject poverty in the fields.

Except those poor souls who have land cursed with a tithe rent charge! This is the contribution of the Church to the problem of agriculture; an extortion, direct survival of the times when the cleric received his stipend in kind; one of the biggest blots on the escutcheon of the Church.

The Church is militant and pursues its militancy in face of the frantic expressions of peace now ensuing. Most of the bloodiest wars in history have been waged in the

name of, fostered by or countenanced by organised religion.

Big-wigs of the Church even now delight in making "pronouncements" in the cause of peace; they open their mouths at the most inappropriate time, "put both feet in it" and do more to prejudice the cause than they do to help.

Any thinking man or woman, not necessarily involved with extreme politics of either shade, but with humanist tendencies, must come up against the Church in his thought wanderings. He or she has only to think. But therein is the rub. As soon as thought starts, religion drops many points. So long as people do not trouble to think will religion act as a brake upon the aspirations of mankind.

A. F. WILLIAMS.

Correspondence

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER."
FREETHOUGHT OR DEMOCRACY?

SIR,—The 1st paragraph of your correspondents' criticism is answered in the latter parts of the 4th, 1st and 7th of my article: similarly, the 12th and 2nd of the reply are met in the 11th of the article, the 5th and 6th in my 7th; and the 7th, 8th, 9th and 11th, in my 8th and 10th, while the 10th and 4th of the reply are mutually refutatory. The last sentence of par. 2 disqualifies the writer from speaking as a Freethinker; it is a plea for chaos. Finally, I did not attack any one class, as shown at the end of par. 6.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Obituary

BERTRAM WATKISS

ON Wednesday, July 31 the remains of Bertram (Bert) Watkiss were laid to rest in Blackburn Cemetery, after a painful illness extending over many months. He had been a Freethinker over thirty years, and was one of those workers behind the scenes, to whom our movement owes so much. A loving husband, and father, a sincere friend, he was highly respected by all who knew him, and Freethought in Blackburn is the poorer for his death. At his own request a Secular Address was conducted by his friend, Mr. J. Clayton.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON
INDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH DISCUSSION SOCIETY (375 Cambridge Road, E.2, opposite Museum Cinema): 8.30, Monday, August 12, Mr. G. Ferguson—"Do We Need Another Religion?"

OUTDOOR

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, August 11, Mr. Ebury. Highbury Corner, 7.30, Mr. Ebury. South Hill Park, 8.0, Monday, August 12, Mr. Ebury. Leighton Road, 8.0, Wednesday, August 14, Mr. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, August 11, Mrs. E. Grout. Rushcroft Road, Briston, 8.0, Tuesday, August 13, Mr. C. Tuson. Manor Street, Clapham High Street, 8.0, Friday, August 16, Mr. P. Goldmann.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road Water Lane, Stratford, E.): 7.0, Mr. E. T. Bryant.

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, Messrs. Saphin and Gee. Fridays, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant and Connell. Current Freethinkers on sale at The Kiosk.

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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY.

President - - - CHAPMAN COHEK.
 General Secretary - R. H. ROSETTI.

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THE National Secular Society was founded in 1866 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

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(Continued from page 510)

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OUTDOOR.

BOLTON N.S.S. BRANCH (Rochdale, Town Hall Square): 7.30, Sunday, August 11, Messrs. Maughan and Coward will lecture.

BLACKBURN N.S.S. BRANCH (The Market): 3.0, Debate—"That the Teaching of the Sermon on the Mount is Moral." Affir.: Mr. Geo. Linden. Neg.: Mr. D. Robinson (Liverpool). 7.0, Mr. D. Robinson—A Lecture.

BLACKBURN MARKET: 7.45, Thursday, August 15, Mr. J. Clayton.

BURNLEY MARKET: 3.0 and 7.0, Sunday, August 11, Mr. J. Clayton.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (Mound, Edinburgh): 7.30, Saturday, August 10. West Regent Street, Glasgow, 7.30, Sunday, August 11. Dunne Square, Paisley, 8.0, Monday, August 12. Mound, Edinburgh (Railway excursion permitting) 8.0, Tuesday, August 13. Dunne Square, Paisley, 8.0, Wednesday, August 14. Dunne Square, Paisley, 8.0, Thursday, August 15. Albert Road, Glasgow, 8.0, Friday, August 16. Mr. G. Whitehead will lecture at each meeting.

HAPTON: 7.45, Tuesday, August 13, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, Sunday, August 11, Mr. C. McKelvie. Belfast Road, Knotty Ash, 8.30, Tuesday, August 13, A Lecture

Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, 8.0, Thursday, August 15, Mr. C. McKelvie.

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

HETTON: 8.0, Tuesday, August 13, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

MORPETH: 7.0, Saturday, August 10, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NEWCASTLE BRANCH N.S.S. (Bigg Market): 8.0, Friday, August 9, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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