

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN •

— Founded 1881 —

Vol. LVI.—No. 22

SUNDAY, MAY 31, 1936

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
Mussolini and Peace—The Editor	- 337
The Iron Hand and the Velvet Glove—Mimnermus	- 339
Things Worth Knowing	- 340
Progress and Reaction in the Eighteenth Century— T. F. Palmer	- 341
Country Churchyard—T. H. Elstob	- 342
The International Congress of Freethinkers— Bayard Simmons	- 346
How I got Salvation—C. Brydges	- 347
The Big Criminal—Ignotus	- 348
The Baleful Influence of the Priesthood—F. Hill	- 349
Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.	

Views and Opinions

Mussolini and Peace

LAST week I pointed out that in driving home the issue "Either a curtailment of the power of individual nations to wage war or a return to barbarism," Mussolini had, unconsciously, done a service to the cause of peace. His action has served just as a bad case of robbery with violence directs attention to the need for better social conditions or a more efficient police force. And it says little for the value or the humanizing influence of Christianity that, only when the brutality, the stupidity and the filth of war threaten by their costliness in cash and life to destroy civilization, have a small percentage of the Christian clergy discovered that war is "unchristian." There is not the slightest doubt that Mussolini has given the world a sample of what the next war will be like. Nor is there any doubt that however tamely the next "great" war commences, so soon as one side finds victory too long delayed, or the position getting desperate, full use of poison gas will be made. One side can always find that the other side began it; the "other side" always does. In the last war it was the German bombs that killed women and children. The bombs of the Allies were so constructed that whenever they were dropped in the neighbourhood of women and children they never exploded; at least no reports of the explosions appeared in the papers of the Allies.

Another feature to note in the Italian-Abyssinian War is that both nations were Christian. Abyssinia is the oldest Christian nation in the world, a country in which religion has a very firm hold on the people. These were declared to be savages. Their long undisturbed enjoyment of Christianity had left their savagery much as it was. And Italy is the home of the Papacy. Rome is the headquarters of the Roman Catholic Church. But throughout the whole of the Italian campaign the Pope has never raised his voice against a single one of the iniquities committed by the Italian troops in Abyssinia. And now that the

iniquity has been consummated, all the Pope has done is to give a warning to the world of the advance of Communism, and the danger it threatens to the Christian religion, and to the Roman Catholic Church in particular. Mussolini at least knew what he was doing when he bought the aid of the Papacy.

* * *

Christianity and War

In England the Protestant Church, in its various branches, has been more vocal against Mussolini, and there has arisen a definite movement among the Christian preachers against war. But as was pointed out by the *News-Chronicle* recently, out of some twenty-seven thousand ministers belonging to the Established, Methodist, Congregational and Baptist Churches, less than five per cent definitely held that Christianity was opposed to war. Of these the Rev. "Dick" Sheppard, who acted as an unofficial recruiting sergeant during the last war, now discovers that war is contrary to the "Spirit of Christ," and was always so. His conversion is rather late in the day, and the Bishop of Chichester says that this attitude is as "blasphemous as Christian Science." This is quite a good comment on the value of the teachings of Jesus Christ, since no agreement whatever exists as to what they mean on vital issues. And that excellent survival of the Stone Age where religion is concerned, Sir Thomas Inskip, ex-Attorney-General and *liaison* officer for rearmaments, declares categorically that Pacifism finds no authority in "God's recorded word." But as Sir Thomas piloted the Sunday Cinema Act through Parliament, while asserting that the desecration of the Sabbath would powerfully contribute to the ruin of Britain, one is not quite sure of his soundness in the matter. Still it is worth noting that one eminent believer in verbal inspiration still exists. So brilliant an intellect must be of great value in our political life.

The one clear thing is that—apart from individual variations, Christians as a whole, and the Christian Church as a whole, have never discovered any antagonism between Christianity and War. Of course, Christians here and there have opposed war, but the figures cited with regard to the proportion of the Christian clergy that is definitely in opposition to it, and at a time when the futility and barbarity of war is a commonplace, are an indication of the little opposition that has come from Christian sources. Dean Inge (*Evening Standard*, May 13), deliberately rejects the plea that the increased brutality of war is due to the decay of religious belief, and also that Christianity has operated in the direction of making war unlawful. He says:—

At what period we may fairly ask, did the Church ever intervene, except in defence of its own interests? Certainly not in the Dark Ages, which were a mere welter of savagery. Certainly not in the time of Caesar Borgia and Machiavelli. The

later "wars of religion" were unusually ferocious. The eighteenth century, when it was really humanized to some extent, was not a religious age.

This is as far as one may expect Dean Inge to go, and it puts a very bad case in the most favourably possible light. Too favourable in view of the facts. For after all, deadly as is the indictment which Mr. Bedborough has drawn against the war-time clergy in his serviceable *Arms and the Clergy*, the more serious count against the Christian Church is not that it gave its support to this or that war. That alone would amount to no more than a difference of opinion about particular conflicts. The more serious counts are two in number. I take the statement of the first count from Lecky, because it comes from one who was under the orthodox obsession that "true Christianity" had exerted a beneficial influence on Society. Yet he writes:—

We may look in vain for any period since Constantine, in which the clergy as a body, exerted themselves to repress the military spirit, or to prevent or abridge a particular war, with an energy at all comparable to that which they displayed in stimulating the fanaticism of the crusaders, in producing the atrocious massacre of the Albigenses, in embittering the religious contests that followed the Reformation. Private wars were no doubt, in some degree, suppressed by their influence. . . . but we can hardly place any great value on their exertions in this field, when we remember that duels were almost or altogether unknown to the Pagan world . . . and that in our own century they are disappearing before the simple censure of an industrial society. It is possible—though it would, I imagine, be difficult to prove it—that the mediatorial office so often exercised by bishops, may sometimes have prevented wars. . . . But when all these qualifications have been fully admitted, the broad fact will remain, that, with the exception of Mohammedanism, no other religion has done so much to produce war as was done by the religious teachers of Christendom during several centuries. The military indulgences of the Popes, by exhortations of the pulpit . . . caused the effusion of oceans of blood, and have been productive of incalculable misery in the world. Religious fanaticism was a main cause of the earlier, and an important ingredient in the later ones. The peace principles, that were so common before Constantine, have found scarcely any echo except from Erasmus, the Anabaptists and the Quakers; and although some very important pacific agencies have arisen out of industrial progress of modern times, these have been, for the most part, wholly unconnected with, and have in some cases been directly opposed to, theological interests.

No one can justly say that this is anything but a very moderate statement of the case, with everything named that would tell in favour of the Christian Church. The action of the Churches in the war of 1914-18 should remind all that the Christian Church has not altered its character.

* * *

Moralizing War

The second, and more serious indictment of the Christian Church is that it did for war what it did for persecution. It moralized it. I do not mean by this that it made war more moral, that it made men more considerate of the "enemy" and less bloodthirsty in the conduct of war. It did not. But it threw over the beastliness and brutality of war a cloak of religious duty and moral endeavour that persists until this day. Paganism had its gods of war and of peace, its temples of war and of peace; but it did not so completely fuse the two as did Christianity. The Christian Church gave the world a god of peace who was also a god of war. And just as it took persecu-

tion and hid its hideous face from mankind by covering it with a mask of concern for the immortal welfare of the sinner and for those whom he might infect, so it took war, covered it with the disguise of duty and self-sacrifice, and placed the soldier in a higher position than he had ever assumed among the civilized nations of antiquity. The Church did not make war less brutal, it simply gave it a higher place in social life. It did not decrease national enmities, it provided more numerous occasions for their manifestation, and taught men to hate each other in terms of religious difference and so lend a sharper edge to the appetite for conflict. Paganism, as I have said, kept its temples of peace and its temples of war distinct. Christianity combined the two; it decorated its churches with war-flags and enemy trophies, and gave the chief places of honour in their "sacred" buildings to those who had been most successful in the art of wholesale slaughter.

* * *

Christianity's Failure

For over sixteen centuries the greatest formative influence of which Europe has been conscious is that of the Christian Church. In the days of its greatest power it ruled the life of man from the cradle to the grave. It watched his education, it helped to determine his place in life, and it marked his destination after death. It held out the promise of peace to men, but it was the kind of peace that Mussolini held out to the Abyssinians—"Obey our rule, or extermination awaits you." In this Mussolini is a true son of the church, and matches its *auto-da-jé* with poison gas, and the prisons of the Inquisition with the torture of men and women for the crime of disobedience. Yet it is the Christian-trained nations that, during the past twenty-five years, have shown the world that the only purpose for which they can combine is for slaughter, and that have given the world the lesson that the one thing on which they cannot agree is to unite for securing a reign of peace. The Pope, chief of the largest and most powerful body of Christians in existence, holding the huge sum with which Mussolini bought the fellowship of the Church in his enslavement of the Italian people (the countrymen of Mazzini and Garibaldi), encourages his priests to pray for the success of one of the most disgraceful wars of recent years. With blinded women and children before his eyes, the victims of the brigandage blessed by the Catholic priests, the Pope can find time only to warn the world against the advance of Communism, leaving the greatest criminal of all undenounced. He warns the world of the evils that await it if people lose their faith in Christianity and become Atheists. Well, we have before us an object lesson of what the world has become with Christianity. Is it likely ever to have a worse outlook without it? The oldest Christian country in the world, is, because of its savagery attacked with unprecedented brutality by the oldest Christian Church in the world. To educate the Abyssinians in the most effective way it adopts methods of which non-Christian savages would be heartily ashamed. And the rest of the Christian nations, assembled in solemn council, can agree upon nothing because not one of them can trust the other to tell the truth, or to act honestly whenever it is to their interest to act otherwise. The Freethinker may well repeat the advice given by Christians: Consider what the world might have been like had the Christian Church never existed!

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Read not to contradict and confute, nor to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider.—*Bacon*.

The Iron Hand and the Velvet Glove

"If somebody had not offended Orthodoxy a century ago, we should now be hanging each other's grandmothers for witches."—O. W. Holmes.

"Be neither saint nor sophist led, but be a man!"
Matthew Arnold.

INDIVIDUAL Christians may be modest and self-effacing, but the salaried Sons-of-God are nothing if not possessive. Contact with the latter, in business or in private, usually leaves the impression that one has been dining with a man who wants all the pudding and two spoons. "Christianity," says a Bible Society Report, "has never lost the instinct of universal domination." This intense desire of wholesale acquisition has expressed itself in many devious ways, but nowhere is it so marked as in the case of Christian priests desiring to claim all eminent men and women as being orthodox.

A very glaring instance is that of Joan of Arc. Burnt alive as a heretic and a sorceress, Joan is now claimed as a "saint" by the Roman Catholic Church. Indeed, Rome has impudently claimed some eminent men on their death-beds. Prince Jerome Napoleon was a well-known Anti-Clericalist, but the priests administered the rites of their Church when he was helpless. Sir Richard Burton, another famous Freethinker, shared the same fate. Nor is the Roman Catholic Church alone in this sorry game of body-snatching. Her young sister, the Church of England, is equally culpable. Her priests buried Charles Darwin in Westminster Abbey, regardless of the fact that he had been denounced in many pulpits for a whole generation as an arch-enemy of their Faith. Doubting Thomas Huxley was buried "in the sure and certain hope" of a Christian legend he had smiled at when living. They mumbled their mythological nonsense over the grave of Swinburne, who hated their creed with the full fury of a poet's scorn. Charles Dickens, who was a Unitarian, and therefore a heretic, was buried in Westminster Abbey. Even the Atheist, Shelley, has a Christian memorial at Christchurch, near Bournemouth, Matthew Arnold was buried with Christian rites at Laleham, and Robert Buchanan's tomb is the principal attraction at St. John's Church, Southend-on-Sea. A Christian funeral was actually forced on the dead body of Richard Carlile, who spent over nine years in prison for fighting Orthodoxy. Sir Herbert Tree was accorded a memorial service. These instances might be largely multiplied, but they serve to show that priests are as unscrupulous as racketeers, and have no objection whatever to lying for the glory of their god.

This artful annexation of opponents of genius has nothing whatever to do with toleration or tenderness. For the Christian Bible reeks with bigotry and persecution, and the Old Testament Hebrews were expressly ordered to kill heretics. The earliest apostles of Christianity were also imbued with the spirit of persecution. In the sacred records Saint Paul smote Elymas with blindness for opposing him, and John, "the beloved disciple," said: "If there come any unto you and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed." Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, says: "If any man preach any other gospel unto you that ye have received, let him be accursed." Even in the infant Christian Church the unbeliever is to be shunned like poison, and the subsequent history of Christianity after its accession to temporal power justifies the Freethinker in regarding bigotry and

persecution as of the very essence of that much over-rated religion. While Christianity survives, the recrudescence of religious persecution is not only possible, but highly probable. To say that an Oriental superstition which threatened everlasting hell-fire for unbelief is opposed to the bitterest persecution on earth is but to whitewash plain facts. The Blasphemy Laws and the kill-joy Sunday Observance Acts are still on the Statute Book, and are at any moment liable to enforcement. They are the standing menace of a dying creed to those who smile at its Eastern fables too ostentatiously. It is a most ironical comment on the bad old times that produced Blasphemy Acts, and gibbets and stakes, that to-day the British Empire actually numbers far more non-Christian subjects than Christian.

The comparatively enlightened nineteenth century was marked by a whole series of ferocious blasphemy prosecutions. It was the desperate effort of a decaying Clerical despotism to retain its hold on temporal power. Such methods might have been only too successful at an earlier period, but the very violence of these continuous and concerted attacks roused the Freethinkers to unexpected effort. Half-way through the nineteenth century organized Freethought was an accomplished fact, and a few years later (1866) the National Secular Society was founded, the first President being the able and courageous Charles Bradlaugh. Under his leadership, and that of his brilliant successors, G. W. Foote and Chapman Cohen, this Society has ever been in the very vanguard of progress, sheltering behind it all the weaker heterodox people, who otherwise had been crushed out of existence by the weight of Christian Orthodoxy. Behind militant Freethought all forms of advanced thought have advanced to some measure of freedom.

It has been a terribly prolonged battle against enormous odds. As the little "Revenge" earned an undying name by hurling herself against the great battleships of Old Spain, so the Freethinkers have displayed the most extraordinary courage in attacking the tremendous Armada of Superstition. The greater the perils, the greater the victory; and in the ripe years to come tardy recognition must be given to their superb courage, which, disregarding any reward, was satisfied with the proud knowledge that their action would diffuse the blessings of liberty to countless thousands of men and women. For in that happy time the stormy note of continuous struggle and endless contention will be changed to the unfaltering trumpet-notes of ultimate victory. In that propitious hour the noble dream of the pioneers will have come true, and the National Secular Society will share with them a lasting place in the history of intellectual progress by bringing it within the realities of life. Freethinkers have ever been the salt of the earth, for their life-work has been to hasten the day when the world will be one country, and to do good the only religion; when frontiers shall be swept away, and there shall be a real brotherhood of man.

MIMNERMUS.

O Tempora! O Mores!

Protect us from Almighty God!
Who has provided with such care,
A hell to roast the child who trod
The path He did Himself prepare.

Can such a monster speak of love,
Who persecutes His creatures thus?
He, whose omnipotence above
Provides a Hell below for us?

B. I. BOWERS.

Things Worth Knowing*

XLIII.

THE MAGICAL ORIGIN OF THE OATH

THE oath in support of testimony still remains in modern law an appeal to supernatural powers. An oath, declared an English Court in 1786, "is a religious asseveration, by which a person renounces the mercy and imprecates the vengeance of Heaven if he do not speak the truth; and therefore a person who has no idea of the sanction which this appeal creates ought not to be sworn as a witness in any court of Justice." The facts before the Court in this case were that, on the trial of an indictment for horse-stealing, one Thomas Atkins, was called as a witness for the prosecution. On being examined he said that he had heard there was a God, and believed that those persons who tell lies would come to the gallows, but he admitted that he had never learnt the catechism, was altogether ignorant of the obligations of an oath, a future state of reward and punishment, the existence of another world, or what became of wicked people after death. The Court, being presumably informed about all these matters, rejected him as an incompetent witness on the grounds stated above.

The scriptural source of the modern oath is clearly shown by the fact that, under the ordinary form of English oath, the use of the New Testament is called for in addition to an invocation of the deity. . . . The result of this doctrinal requirement was that only those who acknowledged the authority of the Bible could be heard before the law, just as in pure Mohammedan law to-day no evidence can be accepted against a Muslim except that of another Muslim. Hence none except persons professing the Jewish or Christian faiths could be sworn as witnesses, a consequence highly inconvenient to an Imperial power, including within its boundaries persons of almost every religious belief. Accordingly in the year 1838 Parliament solemnly passed the Oaths Act, whereby it was provided that anyone may be sworn "in such form and with such ceremonies as such person may declare to be binding." Under this Act, Buddhists have been sworn by the three Holy Existences, Buddha, Dharma, and Pro Sangha, and the devotees of the twenty-two firmaments, a Mohammedan on the Koran, a Parsee on the Zend-Avesta or by binding a holy cord round his body, and a Chinaman by breaking a saucer into fragments and saying: "I tell the truth and the whole truth—if not, as that saucer is broken may my soul be broken like it." Thus did the needs of Empire break down the ancient faith.

Unfortunately the Oaths Act of 1838 was virtually a failure, by reason of the fact that witnesses from foreign lands, although unable to take the English oath, were seldom prepared with a ready-made form of oath which was guaranteed to bind consciences. Still more important as an urge to reform was the advance of scientific thought, the advent of philosophic monism, materialism, and Darwinism, the growth of Agnosticism and Atheism, all of which conspired to undermine the sanction of the oath. Hence half a century later another statute was passed to permit an affirmation to be made in lieu of an oath, where a person objects to being sworn on the ground that he has no religious belief, or that it is against his religious belief to swear an oath.

* Under this heading we purpose printing, weekly, a series of definite statements, taken from authoritative works, on specific subjects. They will supply instructive comments on aspects of special subjects, and will be useful, not merely in themselves, but also as a guide to works that are worth closer study.

There is a certain unconscious humour in section 3 of the Oaths Act, 1888, which declares that where an oath has been duly administered "the fact that the person to whom the same was administered had, at the time of taking such oath, no religious belief, shall not for any purpose affect such oath." Where in former days the divine sanction had been fearfully sought by invoking the contingent wrath of God, the Parliament of Queen Victoria did not hesitate to legislate for the deity.

. . . In the nineteenth century, as we have seen, the English law of oaths was modified so as to be applicable not only to the adherents of one religion, but to men and women of all religions, or of no religion at all. A yet more subtle attack lay in store for it in the twentieth century. In the traditional form of the English oath, the witness concluded his imprecation by kissing the Bible, and saying, "So help me God." This practice came to be regarded as excessively unhygienic by various authorities concerned with the interests of the public health, on the ground that it involved "the kissing of a Testament often badly infected by the lips of previous witnesses." Strenuous efforts were made for many years by the Medical Officer of Liverpool and other exponents of preventive medicine, to obtain the substitution of a form of oath which did not expose the person sworn to the danger of infection from contagious disease. Their efforts were crowned with success with the enactment of the Oaths Act, 1909, the purpose of which is described by one of its promoters as the provision for use on all occasions of "a form of oath which combines solemnity with a due regard to sanitary requirements."

It is doubtful, however, if we can have it both ways. When devotion to hygiene walks in at the door, belief in the supernatural flies out of the window. Modern sanitary science no longer permits us to worship even Hygeia, the goddess of health. The idea that a person could contract disease in the very act of invoking the divine powers would have appeared a monstrous and unthinkable blasphemy to all the generations of men who during long ages developed, feared and guarded the appeal to the supernatural which is embodied in the oath. The people of ancient Babylon, of Rome or Greece, of Europe in the Middle Ages, would have to come nearer to grasping the idea underlying the affirmation than to appreciating the principle of our carefully dusted, shampooed, and disinfected modern oath.

The oath, like the curse and the blessing, was during the greater part of its history associated with priestly office. The priesthood represented the highest power, for it possessed the authority to curse and to bless, to admit to a state of future beatitude or to condemn for all eternity. The oath, with its direct appeal to the supernatural, was most properly administered by someone professionally associated with sacred rites. On the priesthood, too, fell the chief burden of upholding the sanctity of the oath, partly by committing to eternal perdition those who should violate its bond, but also by sentencing them to penitential discipline of the most severe kind.

To-day we have abolished the curse as a sanction of the law . . . the blessing no longer finds a place in our legal institutions. The oath we still retain, but it has become, to a large extent, secularized both in form and in spirit. It is administered by an inferior official of the Court, or by a solicitor. It must accommodate itself to every form and every conscience. . . . The oath in support of testimony is, in short, in a state of disintegration. The religious faith in the direct and immediate visitation of God's anger on him who has sworn falsely has decayed so as to exert little influence on those to whom truth-telling is not a normal rule of conduct.

... In a celebrated passage Sir Henry Maine observed that the most striking fact in the progress of society is the greater sphere and freedom accorded to contract. This he said betokens a growth of morality, for the positive duty resulting from one man's reliance on the word of another is among the slowest conquests of civilization. It is undoubtedly true that mankind had to traverse a long and arduous path before it became inculcated with even such a moderate habit of truthfulness and reliability as we possess today. . . . But to regard the growth of habits of conduct which have been inculcated by a dread of supernatural powers, a fear of divine wrath, disaster in this world and damnation in the next, and which have been supported by myriad forms of slaughter, mutilation, cruelty and sacrifice in order to impart an air of solemnity into the proceedings, as a "growth of morality" is an over-simplification of history, which does little to illuminate the evolution of our legal institutions.

Civilization and the Growth of Law,
by A. ROBSON, pp. 153-60.

Progress and Reaction in the Eighteenth Century

STATIONARY or even reactionary as religion ever tends to be, the impact of scientific discovery and speculation deeply tinged the theology of the eighteenth century. The evolution of separate States with a developing nationalism; the advance of industrialism and other secular influences; all conspired to weaken spiritual agencies with a corresponding increase in the temporal power over religion. So far as the cultured classes were concerned, the spiritual appeal made little impression. Mysticism and zeal were despised and condemned. The leading preachers stressed the importance of business efficiency, honourable dealing and the exercise of public benevolence. Ritual, modes of church government, correctness of creed and kindred themes so fiercely controverted in earlier generations sank into comparative insignificance. "Where do we find," inquired John Adams, in 1770, "a precept in the Gospel requiring ecclesiastical symbols, councils, creeds, oaths, subscriptions, and whole cartloads of other trumpery that we find religion encumbered with in these days? The design of Christianity is not to make good riddle-solvers or good mystery-mongers, but good men, good magistrates, and good subjects."

At this time the Deists were engaged in undermining popular superstition, and their influence was not altogether unfelt by the average citizen, the politicians, men of letters, or the clergy themselves. Bossuet, in France, noted the impending danger to orthodoxy when he complained that, "some Christians robbed Christianity of all its mysteries, and changed it into a sect of philosophy adapted altogether to the senses. . . . This opened the way to Deism, that is to say to a disguised Atheism."

The Newtonian cosmos and the teachings of Locke served to stimulate the growth of rationalism. Those who claimed spiritual illumination—an inner light—Shaftesbury characterized as utterers of "unintelligible nonsense."

On the Continent the power of the Papacy had seriously shrunk, and Voltaire's crusade against "the infamous" was felt in every European land. In England, Chesterfield remarked that: "The papal power founded originally on the ignorance and superstition of mankind is declined of late in proportion as knowledge has increased."

Even Louis XIV. had constrained the Pope to acknowledge the royal prerogative in clerical appointments. In Germany, Spain and Italy the Church was driven to concession after concession by the secular power, while in Russia, Peter the Great, in 1700, placed the Greek Church under temporal control.

The English Revolution of 1688 also served to lessen ecclesiastical authority. As Professor Preserved Smith points out in his highly important *History of Modern Culture*, Vol. II., p. 455, "The triumph of complete Erastianism was signalized by the suppression of Convocation in 1717. This legislative body of the Church, soon after the Revolution came into conflict with the Government of William and Mary, and then with that of Anne, over the jurisdiction of the civil power in ecclesiastical matters, and over the toleration of the Dissenters. In 1717 it was dissolved, not to be empowered to do any important business until 1852."

Several religious societies, including that designed for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge, were founded soon after the Whig triumph of 1688. These bodies instructed the "lower orders" concerning their duties towards their betters, while endeavouring to reconcile them to the abject condition under which Providence had placed them. This plan was naturally approved by the governing classes.

But although sectarian strife continued to exercise its baleful sway, the deadly animosity of past generations had declined. The leaven of Freethought lightened many pious minds. At least in theory, the censorship had been abolished, but the Blasphemy Laws were ever at hand to those who were only too solicitous to suppress all independence of opinion in matters theological. The upper classes read and secretly sympathized with the writings of Blount, Collins, Toland and other Deists, but very few indeed would have allowed these heretics publicly to stand between the wind and their own nobility. Swift, who was himself very latitudinarian, denounced and reviled the Deists with great bitterness. This, of course, came exceedingly well from the author of the *Tale of a Tub*. Pope, again, a nominal Catholic, but practically a Deist, who versified in his *Essay on Man* the Freethinking philosophy of his intimate friend, Lord Bolingbroke, had nothing but venom to spit at less exalted unbelievers. But is not a similar attitude quite common even now?

With the intellectual sections of society Deism was so permanently successful that it prepared the path for the religious revolution of the nineteenth century. Then, as now, however, the mass of the people grovelled in primitive superstition. Their emotions craved satisfaction so, despite the advances of rationalism during the eighteenth century, crude religiosity regained much of its former power.

Revivalist successes both in England and America demonstrated an almost instinctive adherence to traditional beliefs. Jonathan Edwards and John Wesley were indubitably men of very considerable ability and force of character, whose lives were dominated by deeply religious sentiments and emotions. When young, Wesley loved passionately, yet refrained from matrimony, because he imagined it contrary to divine desire. Still, he subsequently contracted a loveless union with intense misery, to both man and wife. Also, Wesley was harsh, overbearing and ridiculously punctilious in the petty details of life.

Accompanied by his brother Charles, he went in 1735 on a missionary enterprise to Georgia in the States, but discovered to his deep disgust that the Indian population was indifferent to his ministrations while most of the whites spurned his message. Wesley's arrogant conduct led to litigation, and in 1738 he returned to England a bitterly disappointed man.

He was greatly depressed, and for a time regarded himself as destined to eternal damnation, but was restored to serenity by means of a remarkable conversion.

He visited Germany to master the spiritual teachings of the Moravians, and then came home to preach the Gospel to the poor and oppressed. While wishing to remain a loyal son of the Anglican Church, he condemned the frigid formalism and worldliness of the clergy. In the words of Prof. Smith: "Excluded from the pulpits of his own church, persecuted by her officials, and set upon by mobs, he was forced to erect separate chapels, and to preach to crowds of the unchurched in the open air. His efforts were warmly and ably seconded by George Whitefield (1714-70), whom even his enemies conceded to be one of the most effective of popular orators."

Wesley's campaign of conversion was conducted in terms of a constant appeal to fear, and wild emotion. When the congregations had been highly exalted by the singing of hymns of a deeply emotional character, the preacher proceeded to stimulate sentiment, rapture and heartrending terror. "Sermons on the awfulness of sin, on the day of judgment, on the eternal torments of hell, frequently threw the congregations into panic, manifesting itself in the wildest hysteria, by sobs, groans, cries of anguish, and occasionally by raving mania."

This revolting method of exhortation, however repugnant to the cultured, exercised a direful influence over the ignorant audiences to which it was mainly addressed. Horrible as it seems to rational minds, Wesley regarded these pathological phenomena as certain evidences of divine approval. In his Diary, the revivalist notes that from 1739 to 1743 his sermons had caused "234 cases of hysteria, manifested by convulsive tearings, trembling, crying, groans, tears, and occasionally by much more serious symptoms. Eighty-five of his hearers, he reported had 'dropped as dead'; two had developed psychogenic blindness, fourteen had been made temporarily insane, and nine had been driven into incurable madness."

Nor were the deplorable results of Wesley's teaching restricted to a revival of the torments of hell. All the crudest and most savage aspects of Christian theology were restored. Again, Wesley's denunciation of the anomalies of eighteenth century civilization were not directed against the evils inflicted on the poor, but were urged against its encouragement of sports and pastimes, power and enlightenment. Science, he said, was the primrose path to Atheism, while amusements led straight to hell. Social reforms he constantly opposed, and he desired George III. to dismiss Parliament and rule in his own name. He scorned the claims of the American colonists as well as the grievances of Ireland. Wilkes and liberty he derided, while he usually spoke of the reforming efforts of Burke and Pitt with stern disapproval.

Wesley's untiring energy was worthy of a far better cause. He preached in all parts of Britain and in many American States. His colleague Whitefield was equally indefatigable, and his sermons totalled 18,000 in thirty-four years. When Wesley passed away the Methodist community numbered 71,000 in Great Britain and Ireland, while there were upwards of 57,000 of the cult in British America. But these were the mere beginnings of the Methodist movement. It later became predominant in Wales, and it grew into the largest Protestant denomination in the New World. Its adherents in Britain were largely miners and factory operatives, while in America its devotees were mainly ill-instructed whites and emotional negroes. Politically, socially,

and, above all, intellectually, Methodism proved sadly retrogressive, while it seriously handicapped the progress of Freethought among the industrial sections of the community.

T. F. PALMER.

Country Churchyard

II.—THE LONG PACK

THERE came one of those times in life when several threads snapped simultaneously, and one had unwillingly to terminate town life with all its associations and activities, and embark upon what has turned out to be a wandering but entertaining existence. The first place of temporary residence was Bellingham, a small country place on the North Tyne, in almost wild Northumbria. It is not far from the Border, where to be descended from one of the sheep-stealing clans of Charlton, Ridley, Milburn, etc., is accounted the most signal of honours. Bellingham is only about eight miles south of Otterburn, of historical associations. In this delightful village one lived for nearly a year, and the memories are vivid and pleasant still. It was around one of the big mansions near Bellingham that the legend of The Long Pack encrusted itself. This rather gruesome legend was "written up" by James Hogg, the Ettrick Shepherd, and became one of the best-known and most popular of his tales. *The Long Pack* tells of a pedlar who, failing to persuade a servant-girl to give him lodging for the night, prevailed upon her eventually to give house-room to his pack. The unusual length and shape of this, aroused her curiosity, and during a later and closer inspection she thought she detected some movement in it. This, in alarm, she reported to her sweetheart, who, to quell her anxiety, promptly put a musket-shot into the bundle. There was a fearful yell and a stream of blood gushed out and streamed over the floor.

Christians, we are asked, inferentially, to believe, were sports in those days, and the ingenious house-breaker, it would appear, had not only little difficulty in obtaining Christian burial, but even managed to get a horizontal stone of length but little breadth, and covered with hieroglyphics, erected by his admirers. That it is rather like a long pack is, of course, exactly what a student of Mythos expects, but then students of Mythos should not be allowed in a Christian country much less in a Christian Churchyard. These persons who enquire into origins are disturbers of the peace and invariably ask questions that no gentleman would ever ask. The Good Christian knows instinctively that he who asks questions about the grave of Little John and the Long Pack is asking the same type of question that would disintegrate any old dogma.

We will waive, to oblige, the question of authenticity and incur the guilt of ungentlemanliness on another count. Christianity, it is not pretended, is renowned for clarity even about its fundamentals, whatever these fundamentals may be. If, however, there is one thing that is tolerably plain in its teaching, it is as to the fate of the sinner who is cut off in his sins. Now this poor unshriven wretch in the North Country was cut off with his sins smelling to heaven. In 1723, the alleged date of the occurrence, if a plebiscite of the dignified clergy had been taken, every hand would have been raised to vote in accordance with the view that the unfortunate gentleman hadn't a dog's chance of escaping the Vengeance of God. He didn't distinguish between *meum* and *tuum*, and had shown his lack of acumen in a crude way. If, instead, he had burnt midnight oil in order

to discover how to convert *tuum* to *meum* with the full concurrence of Acts of Parliament, without taking the slightest personal risk, he might have been acclaimed a great social asset and a pillar of the Church. He had, however, attempted the transference clumsily, and, as the outcome demonstrated, taken the gravest of all risks. If ever there was a case for burial at Four Cross Roads with several stakes in his inside, it was the case of the hero of the Long Pack.

It would appear that there is only one explanation of our friend having received Christian burial which has plausibility. It was universally recognized in those days that the most substantial risk the sinner took was in not being allowed at the last a few minutes, or even a few seconds, for repentance. If allowed these moments, then all the scarletness of the sinner would be eradicated, and he would become whiter than snow. Of course one is told by theological experts that one has to be sincere in one's repentance. Still, if there is anything more than another that is calculated to make for perfect sincerity it is to be held in rather an offhand, careless manner, over a cauldron of liquid fire. No, it was undoubtedly a conviction of the remarkably hard lines the burglar had encountered in his profession that aroused amongst the miserable sinners amongst whom he dwelt, a feeling of profound sympathy. The parting tear would be there for him all right; a genuine, heart-felt display of emotion, and it would be those who felt the poignancy of the situation most, who, no doubt, would do the "forking out" and be responsible for the memorial. Even nowadays, there is plenty of evidence for the same sentiment existing. One can remember a murderer sentenced to the gallows, who, taken ill, was skilfully treated by the best brains of the medical profession, carefully dieted and nursed back to health with the utmost concern, so that he was able to have the last consolations of religion and be jerked with proper ceremony, but quite incontrovertible certainty, to Jesus. Then there was Joy in Heaven. Quite a hysterical amount of joy in fact, for Jesus has assured us that there would be more joy over his arrival in Heaven than there would be over the arrival of ninety and nine just persons. The logic of which is that when mankind becomes 100 per cent just, which hardly looks like materializing in our day, Heaven (a dull place, from all accounts, at any time), will be 100 per cent dull, and its only willing occupants those who cannot stand heat at any price.

Our friend from Sheffield, I think it is obvious, could spend the reverse of a dull week-end at Bellingham. He had better not, however, stick to his usual schedule and give a lecture in the village. He would be given as scanty support as if he had opposed fox-hunting, otter-hunting, and coursing, all of which, I am afraid, are received and revered "sports" in the neighbourhood. It was at the source of Hareshaw Beck, whilst endeavouring to locate some underground springs to serve Bellingham as a water-supply, that on raising my eyes from the ground I saw a fox only two yards from me. I was to learn the next day, that the hunted animal had taken to water at Hareshaw Linn, a well-known water-fall in the district—not being, curiously enough, one of those foxes who enjoy the hunt, but sensing a chance of salvation from the wrath to come. To remove the "scent," it had followed the stream until it had become the tiniest trickle. I called the attention of one of the workmen, but although I had only momentarily withdrawn my gaze, I saw the fox no more. Reynard, I was to learn in time, has a miracle or two in his locker that he can work even on a moor almost free from undulations. It was at Bellingham,

as well, that I had my only experience of a day's coursing. Like *Jurgen*, I am willing to taste any kind of drink once. It was a disgusting beverage, and I wish it were as mythical as the tale of the Long Pack.

T. H. ELSTOB.

Acid Drops

Father Sargent, O.P., was the official English delegate at the homecoming of Fr. Damien's body in Belgium recently, when the train in which he was travelling ran off the rails. Although the express ran on for about 350 yards, it did not turn over and only one passenger was hurt. Fr. Sargent attributed this miraculous escape to the protection of (the late) Fr. Damien. The Belgian railway authorities put down the escape from a terrible disaster to the new steel coaches composing the train. What a commentary on the credulous and superstitious priest!

More wonderful relics are announced. In the attic of an old rectory at Sittard, Holland, there have been discovered bones belonging to the Apostles, Philip, Bartholomew and (Doubting) Thomas. There can be no possible doubt whatever about these bones as the church dates from 1299 A.D., and the town is one of the oldest centres of Catholicism in Holland. This ought to silence any blasphemous scepticism about the remains of the Holy Apostles—the line of succession is so obvious, and the bones can so easily be attributed to the correct saint. In addition, relics of SS. Agatha and Lucy have also been found together with the head of St. Placid. A few cures will soon be announced so as to make the discovery one of the most momentous in the history of the world. And if millions of conversions do not follow, there must be something wrong with the mentality of the people. But perish such a thought!

On the authority of Miss Dora Owen, as reported in the *Daily Express*, to call Mrs. Amy Mollison, "Our Lady of the Skies" is a phrase "unbearable to the hearts and consciences of all Catholics." It must be truly awful for Catholics to find, not only our national newspapers, but ordinary common people, blaspheming in this terrible way. The only woman who is both "Our Lady of the Skies," and "Our Lady of the Seas," as well as the "Mother of God" is Mary; and we are astonished to find any well-informed national newspaper transferring one of these titles to a mere ordinary woman like Mrs. Mollison. It is a wonder "Our Lord" or "Our Lady" did not make her crash in the Sahara—or on the offices of the *Daily Express*.

B.B.C. listeners have been favoured with a series of "Talks" purporting to give "The Christian Answer to the Problem of Evil." The "answer" is exactly the same answer that has been given by goddists in all ages, especially the Dark Ages of Faith. It sounded queer to Listeners—in 1936—with the aid of the most popular of all the many scientific "toys" of our age, to hear Isaac Watts quoted, and "Faith" specified as the only possible solvent of the problem of evil. As we have often pointed out, the "problem" of Evil is in no sense different from the problem of Good. To recognize this identity is essential to any intelligent consideration of either "question."

A correspondent in the *Listener* writes a very brief but most devastating note in connexion with the series of "Talks" by the Rev. J. S. Whale. The correspondent, Mr. Burdett, has nicely calculated how much genuine criticism the Editor of the B.B.C. organ would allow to appear. He confines his letter to the laconic words: "Two things seem to emerge. First, that in God's eyes, it appears that the end justifies the means. Second, that God cannot secure good ends without evil means." Few letters contain more wisdom in so few words.

Eight hundred people made the annual faith-healing pilgrimage to Lourdes this year. Included in this number were sixty priests, five doctor-pilgrims, thirteen trained nurses and fifty-one hand-maidens of the sick. There seems to have been some kind of suspicion abroad that these addenda would come in useful somehow. Just as the last train was leaving Victoria Station a woman rushed up, realized she had missed the train, and then collapsed. This poor woman has been taught that in these matters, it is the strict adherence to formula that carries most weight with the Roman Catholic God. Begone, Dark Night!

Judge Earegey, at the Clerkenwell County Court, commenting on the case of a prison chaplain who did not answer a judgment summons; said, "Members of the cloth sometimes take peculiar views with regard to legal matters." The clerical gentleman, as is quite common, has evidently derived not only his spiritual gifts, but his arrogance, from the attempt to model himself upon Jehovah, and it is pleasing to know that in this instance, at any rate, the fact did not permit him to escape censure.

The Bishop of Southwark is interesting himself in the possibilities of the religious film. At the Kingsway Hall recently, he suggested that the story of Jeremiah and other Biblical stories, could be shown on the screen "to great advantage." Perhaps, but whose advantage? Another speaker thought the religious film "could be put on a sound commercial footing." If they can, the religious film will come sure enough. All the same *Jeremiah* does not seem to us to be a "winner."

Another Bishop, the Bishop of Bristol, has been speaking to the Diocesan Conference at Wells. He spoke of the "enormous debt" the Churches owed to the B.B.C., and reminded his audience that "people would not listen to the religious services unless they felt that it was involving a need." Then he continued, "I don't know if any here listen to that queer production, the name of which is 'crooning.' I should never listen to that as though it was supplying a 'need.'" The Bishop of London must look to his laurels.

A four-page appeal on behalf of the Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital appears in the *Times*. No clearer evidence of Man's superiority to his "God" need be sought than this illustrated appeal. Poor little patients are shown in all the deformities of spinal curvature, tuberculosis of the spine and of the hip, infantile paralysis, bow legs, club feet, knock knees, etc. Several pictures are of cases "before treatment," and "after treatment." God's handiwork is not good enough for man; God proposes but Man disposes.

London Diocesan Fund finances are causing the Bishop of London anxiety. "At least £10,000 a year more is wanted," says he. £45,700 has been spent from capital to "meet the needs of the new areas," in sites, bricks and mortar, halls, schools and parsonage houses. And, "so far as the Fund is concerned," the Bishop naively remarks, "money so expended ceases to produce any income and becomes unavailable to meet other needs!" "The days of very large contributors seem to have passed," our prelate thinks (the report says "thinks") so he suggests a "Band of Friends" who might subscribe £25, £10, or £5 a year apiece. Oddly enough one never notices the "religious needs of new areas" being given expression to by the residents themselves.

It is notorious that a clerical "yea" is not necessarily an affirmative, nor is a "nay" necessarily a negative. Therefore, when the Archbishop of Canterbury bemoans the Administration's purpose to "slice no less than £11,000,000 out of the incomes and revenues of the property of the clergy" in one breath, and in the next breath approves the "great advantages to come from the change," we need not worry to probe the mystery. Mr. Lang's complaint, however (at the dinner of the

Corporation of the Sons of the Clergy) came *piano*, while his commendations of the Tithe Bill were almost *fortissimo*. And *we—you*—are to be sheared just like the other lambs in the Christian fold, to the tune of £70,000,000, to recompense the parsons for their sale of the *generous gifts of the people*.

The fact that the "hierarchy" have been complaining that so many Catholics do not know their faith has resulted in the *Universe* publishing a sort of "refresher" course in the Catechism. Some of these questions and answers are marvels of unconscious humour. Here is an example:—

Q. Why did God make you?

A. God made me to know Him and serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him for ever in the next.

This is another sample of the fatuity which appeals not only to our Catholic *intelligentsia*, but to the most ignorant and uneducated Catholic. It is supposed to reaffirm the Faith and strengthen conviction. Is it possible that any one can really read this nonsense without laughing?

The *Daily Herald* prints a letter from a humane Christian, burning with indignation against the sufferings of the massacred Abyssinians. But the correspondent has found out the real cause of the mass murders. "God," says this very pious reasoner, "could have caused the Italian armies to be completely destroyed." Yes, yes, we know all about God's omnipotence. But Why? And the answer given is that "It was His Purpose to allow this terrible sacrifice as a TEST to the League of Nations." What a God! To spare the guilty Italians and murder the innocent Ethiopians—"all to Thy glory."

The *Church Times* points out "the common gibe of the ignorant, that the only people interested in religion are callow curates and lonely old women," and comments on the gibe by adding that it is "only one of the grotesqueries of the unbeliever." We, at least, do not plead guilty, for over and over again we have pointed out that it is one of the facts of religion that so many military and naval men should be so profoundly religious. Nelson was a typical example of how a man could believe so thoroughly and at the same time, have a wife and a mistress. Foch, Haig, Jellicoe and dozens of other warriors were all ready to go on their knees before the Lord. The Italian military authorities, who showered mustard and other poisonous gas on Abyssinian women and children in mud huts, and who expect to be loudly acclaimed for their military prowess, are, we understand, also religious to their finger tips, and are ready to grovel, not only to the Lord, but to the Pope—much to the Pope's delight, of course. Militarism always has and always will go hand in hand with religion.

The *Canterbury Diocesan Notes* for May contains what the Archdeacon of Canterbury describes as "interesting and suggestive," an original story of Jesus, written by a Public Schoolboy, aged 16-17. Jesus is described as a young man between 18 and 20. He is walking down the main street of Nazareth when he is hailed by a group of young men. He links up arms with them and they stroll through the town. Suddenly a pitiful scream is heard. Jesus dashes round a corner and sees a young girl of sixteen reeling against a wall. Her veil is torn and two coarse-looking men are heaping insults on her. Jesus hurls himself at the hooligans. Startled, they looked up and had a glimpse of an angry, set face, and a pair of whirling arms, and Jesus was into them. He secured one, gave him a sound thrashing with his own whip and the other ran away. So Jesus appears as a champion of maidens in distress, who could put up his "dukes" to advantage when the occasion demanded it. This uninspired story is quite as "interesting" as "suggestive" and some of the stories in the New Testament compare favourably by comparison.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

F. E. JONES (Buenos Aires).—Mr. Cohen thanks you for your kind wishes.

J. A. BLUNDELL.—Many thanks for addresses of likely new readers. Paper being sent for four weeks.

J. TREE.—So glad you found *Arms and the Clergy* so useful for propaganda purposes, and note, with pleasure, that you have already purchased several copies for distribution.

A. HANSON.—The review of Mr. Beverley Nichols' book, is unavoidably held over.

FOR Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—Don Fisher, 38.

H. LAWSON.—We appreciate what you say with respect to the "Views and Opinions" of our last issue. But it is useless to expect an ordinary paper to notice the *Freethinker* and its quality. It would offend too many pious subscribers. After all the value of this journal lies in its independence.

MATTHEW EMBERSON writes—"I have greatly enjoyed Mr. Bedborough's *Arms and the Clergy*. It has helped me greatly in many a wordy warfare, and the record of what the clergy said during the war is of great value. It is a pity that it cannot be printed and distributed at a very low price." Well, it is not a high price now. A shilling is very little when one remembers the size of the book, and the work involved in it. It is a deadly document, and the only one of its kind dealing with the last war. We expect to be issuing a second edition soon.

R. EASTWOOD.—Pleased to have your appreciation of "The Church's Pound of Flesh." Hope the copies of the paper you are circulating will prove fruitful.

J. W. H. DAVIS.—Good business. The younger generation have not had to fight for the liberties they enjoy, and are therefore inclined to take their permanence for granted.

J. R. HOLMES.—Thanks. As you say the phrase in "How I got Salvation," should have run "Mary conceived of the Holy Ghost," not "was conceived."

W. L. E.—Thanks for copy. See "Sugar Plums."

D. (Melbourne).—Thanks. Shall appear.

W. H. Sissons.—Very pleased to hear of the good work done by Messrs. Whitehead, Hankin, Maughan, yourself and others in the towns named. We hope it will have a "snowball" effect.

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

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

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

The "*Freethinker*" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

Sugar Plums

Mr. Cohen is having a few days' holiday in order to prepare for the more trying labours of the Conference, and this number of the *Freethinker* is being issued in his absence. We know that the generous indulgence of its readers can be counted upon in the circumstances.

To-day (May 31), the National Secular Society's Annual Conference meets at Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street. The business meetings are at 10.30 to 12.30, and 2.30 to 4.30, and are for members only. Admission is by current card of membership. Those who, by any mischance, have not received their cards, may apply to the Secretary at the meetings. A luncheon will be

served at one o'clock, price three shillings. On Saturday evening (May 30), at 7, there will be a reception of members and delegates at the Hotel, at which there should be a good muster of members. Refreshments and music will be provided.

On Sunday there will be the Public Demonstration in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn, commencing at 7 p.m. Mr. Chapman Cohen will occupy the chair, and addresses will be given by well-known speakers in the N.S.S. movement, a full list of whom appears on the back page of this issue. Admission is free, with some reserved seats at one shilling each.

Provincial Delegates and Members attending the Annual Conference on arriving in London can proceed by Underground to either Blackfriars or Farringdon Stations. Anderton's Hotel, Fleet Street, is a few minutes walk from either.

The nature of freedom has often been discussed, and there is much room for deciding the question. So it is good to have decisions from authoritative sources. Thus the notorious Goebbels, Hitler's right-hand man: It is not true there is no freedom in Germany. All that the German branch of the Fascist movement did was to destroy "the intellectual anarchy of the press," that is, to insist that the papers should all print the same news, and print nothing against official orders. From the Italian branch of Fascism we get the supporting declaration that "the Italian Press is free. It is limited only by the Fascist faith." As non-faith involves castor-oil, beating up, and imprisonment this is freedom indeed. After these two the declaration from the British Branch of Fascism that Fascists are merely forbidden to listen to opponents seems very mild. But we all walk before we run, and we may reach the Italian and German branches' level in time.

But we are getting on. Following the recent capers of the film-censor comes the news that the same individual has cut from a film, pictures showing Mr. Macdonald in friendly confab with Mussolini over the Stresa agreement, and three others dealing with the peace campaign of the League of Nations campaign, which (for the moment) converted Mr. Baldwin. Any film encouraging war is passed with ease. Anything reflecting upon the Government or encouraging peace is kept under. And in Northern Ireland there is established a legal dictatorship which decrees that a man is held guilty till he is proved innocent, examination of an accused man is carried on in private, the police may search without warrant, and a body of Protestants is formed, which reminds one very much of the German, Italian, and British Branches of the Fascist Movement. In this country we have to be content for the moment with particular acts in these directions by the police. But we are getting on, and it looks as though the fight for real Freethought will be fairly stiff in the near future.

Our note on the *Daily Herald's* reference to the "notorious" Francisco Ferrer appears to have had an effect. Some of our readers protested to the editor of the *Herald*, and we have received copies of the reply sent. Here it is:—

In reply to your letter, the reference to Francisco Ferrer got into the paper inadvertently. You will no doubt have noticed that the impression created has been removed by a letter in Postbag on the 13th inst.

Good, but not so good as it ought to have been. The reference appeared in a news item, and we feel certain of two things. First that had it referred to some prominent member of the Roman or other Church the *inadvertence* would not have occurred; second had it happened there would have been a note by the editor expressing his regret, and not the insertion of *one* letter from an indignant correspondent. We suggest now that the editor should arrange for a special article telling his readers what Ferrer did, and how the Government and

the Church combined in his murder. That might, it is true, offend some of the *Herald's* Roman Catholic readers, but one ought to take risks sometimes. Anyway, we hope that our readers will be equally vigilant when a similar injustice is again done to Freethinkers. Usually, they take such treatment without comment. One of those who protested cancelled his subscription to the *Herald*.

The *Sunday Times* recalls a gruesome tale of Sedgfield, that small country town in the County of Durham, now known particularly for its Mental Asylum. A rector of that place long ago had the misfortune to die before his tithes were due. The story goes that his wife put his body into brine and so kept his death secret until "all was safely gathered in." God was not amused however, and, consequently, for several generations parishioners were much troubled by the spectre of the "Pickled Parson." Shortly before the beginning of last century however, the ancient rectory was destroyed by fire; ever since then the ghost has not walked, so it can be said now to be well and truly laid.

"Sylvanus," in the same journal recalled the interesting information that the directors of one of our great Railway lines, in 1848, refused to give the Duchess of Sutherland conveyance by a passing mail-train to her father's death-bed, because it was Sunday. Thus was the day kept "Holy."

The International Congress of Freethinkers

LAST week Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner wrote in the *Freethinker* an interesting account of certain of the more public activities of this Congress. This week it falls to me to take my British Freethought comrades "behind the scenes," as it were, of this epoch-making Congress. "Epoch-making" is a somewhat hackneyed and an often abused word, but truly it is no exaggeration to apply it to the Prague Congress. The decisions taken then by this Congress will require very careful consideration by the competent Freethought bodies in this country, and I would ask of my British comrades their indulgence if the tale I have now to unfold does not make light, chatty reading.

The British delegation to the Congress numbered eight, of which two were official delegates. They were myself, Mr. Bayard Simmons (officially representing the National Secular Society), and Mr. Charles Bradlaugh Bonner (officially representing the Rationalist Press Association, "R.P.A."), together with Mrs. Ada Fifett of London, Mr. Bridge of Leipzig, Germany, Mr. H. C. Reeve, late of South Africa, now of Dorset, Mr. G. Knight of Eston, Yorks, and two unattached sympathizers, Mrs. Dunlop of Gloucestershire, and Miss Glenny of Dorset. Five of these eight delegates are associated with the teaching profession. The party was personally conducted to Prague from London by Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner, and arrived there on April 10, where it was officially welcomed by the Chairman of the Czech Freethinkers, Mr. Em. V. Voska. Eleven States were represented at the Congress by 74 delegates. Spanish Freethinkers, now reforming after suppression by the late Spanish administration, were not able to send a delegate. The sole official languages of the Committee and of the Congress were French and German.

The Congress opened on April 11 in the Smetana Hall, the largest and finest hall in Prague, belonging to the municipality, and throughout was presided over by Dr. M. Terwagne, President of the International Union. As is usual at such congresses, papers were read on various problems connected with the Freethought Movement, but (also as usual), the real work of the Congress went on in lobbies and committee-rooms. The work of translation was simplified by mimeographing copies of the speeches already translated into different tongues and distributing to the delegates. Some account of these speeches and papers was given by Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner last week: they were of a high level of oratory and in-

terest. The translations necessary were given by Mr. I. Milde, editor of the chief Freethought organ in Czechoslovakia, and chief official translator to the Congress. To this more public work of the Congress, Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner contributed, in French, a paper on "Youth and Freethought," and, being an ex-teacher, naturally treated his subject from the scholastic point of view.

The real business of the Congress was, as has been indicated, transacted behind the scenes. Decisions were taken of great moment. Nothing less than the birth of a new Freethought International was witnessed. Whether this will be advantageous or not remains to be seen, but, after Prague, the landscape of International Freethought has been entirely altered. How this came about I will try briefly to summarize. Any opinions expressed are, of course, entirely my own.

Prior to the Prague Congress there have been two bodies representing the International aspect of Freethought. There was the old International Union of Freethinkers, which might, I think, not unfairly, and, of course, in this connexion only, be compared with that well-known body the *Second International* of labour and social-democratic parties. A few years ago a new International Freethought body was created, called the International Union of Proletarian Freethinkers. This body, I suggest, may with even greater fairness be regarded as an analogue of the *Third (or Communist) International*. The type of its membership, and the cast of thought of its leaders seem to me to be adequately indicated by the word "Proletarian" in its title.

The (for short) Proletarian International has its headquarters at Bagnolet, near Paris, and claims the following membership. (1) *Soviet Union*, Union of Atheist Militants, five million members, but fees paid only on 200,000 to the Proletarian International. (2) *Czechoslovakia*, Central Union of Czechoslovakia, 20,000 members (primarily, it is reported, a "cremation society," of a "friendly society" nature). (3) *France*, Workers without God, of France and of the Colonies, 5,000. (4) *Switzerland*, Union of Proletarian Freethinkers, 600. (5) *Holland*, 150. (6) *England*, Union of Militant Atheists, 150. (7) *Belgium*, Belgian Atheist Federation, 200. (8) *India*, Self-Respect League, membership unknown, and (9) and (10) certain underground (i.e., illegal) sections in Germany and Austria. It will thus be seen that of the effective membership of this International, totalling about 226,000, the Russian membership swamps all possible opposition. This organization runs a monthly organ, *La Pensée Humaine*, edited, I believe, by Dr. Galperine, an able gentleman of mixed Russo-French birth, and its secretary is Mr. Jansen, a Scandinavian presumably, living in France. Its "big noise" is Professor Lukachevsky, of Moscow, a leader of the Union of Atheist Militants.

The Executive Officers of the old International, which has its headquarters at Brussels, are, according to international usage, all Belgians. These officers are Dr. M. Terwagne, its much honoured President; Mlle. P. H. Pardon, its hardworking Secretary; and the genial Monsieur R. Clerebaut, Treasurer. This International holds a Congress every two years. Its last Congress was at Barcelona and the one before that at Berlin.

Since the Berlin Congress, negotiations for a "united front" of the two Internationals have been going on. These negotiations languished for a while, but last January at a meeting held at Brussels between the Belgian officers of the old International and Mr. Jansen, representing the Proletarians, an accord between the two Internationals seemed to have been reached. In general, this accord was based on the need for the unity of all Freethinkers throughout the world to struggle against clerical reaction, war, and Fascism, and to strive for peace, democratic rights (including liberty of conscience) and for education in its widest sense. It is important to note that the struggle against Fascism was to be on cultural ground and not on economic or political grounds, which were held to be not the business of the Internationals as such. The actual French text of the minutes ran: "*Notre tâche spéciale consiste à livrer le combat sur le terrain culturel et non sur les terrains*

économiques et politiques qui ne sont pas de notre domaine."

It seems to me that, put bluntly, the Prague Congress was more or less confronted with a *fait-accompli*. A "united front" of some sort had been agreed upon by the leaders of the two Internationals; all that remained to be considered was the form that this front should take. The matter would be voted on and settled by the Council of the International Union, in other words, the official delegates to the Congress. The two representatives of Great Britain on the Council were, therefore, myself, representing the N.S.S., and Mr. Bradlaugh Bonner, for the R.P.A.

Co-operation having been decided upon the question was, should this take the form of a marriage—a trial marriage, as the N.S.S. delegate put it—or of a fusion of both bodies into one single International. The two British delegates both spoke and voted in favour of the former expedient.

The question of the form of co-operation had been referred to a committee presided over by M. André Lorulot, a leading French delegate. This gentleman is editor of *La Colotte* and *L'Idée Libre*, both Parisian Freethought monthlies. The committee reported to the Council in favour of fusion and laid down the lines on which this should be effected. Neither of the British delegates, it should be remarked, was included in membership of this committee.

The vote for fusion was as follows: For, 34; against, 16; abstentions, 6. Fusion was, therefore, carried by a two to one majority. Details of voting include these important factors. The French delegation, disposing of 25 votes, voted for fusion; the English with 6 votes (3 to N.S.S. and 3 to R.P.A.), voted against fusion; the Germans, formerly (till Hitler's advent) the most numerous and powerful body in the old International, had only five votes. The Proletarian International, of course, took no part in this vote. The matter, it will be seen, was really settled by the French. (The Franco-Russian alliance has its reflection in other quarters than the politico-military, it would seem.)

The Lorulot committee recommended the distribution of offices in the new International on the following basis, and this too was adopted, but without a vote.

President, Dr. M. Terwagne (old International); Vice-President, Prof. Lukachevsky (Proletarian International); Secretary, Mlle. P. H. Pardon (old International); Assistant-Secretary ("Secrétaire-adjoint"), Mr. Jansen (prol. Inter.); Treasurer, M. R. Clerehaut (old International); Assistant-Treasurer, (a Proletarian Internationalist). In addition to these officers the committee of the new International was to be composed of ten members, five of which were to be from old and five from the new Internationals.

On the face of it, it appears to me that supporters of the old régime should have little to fear from the new order of things, for the key positions remain with the old Internationalists. But "money talks," and nothing was vouchsafed the Council on this subject. Quite obviously the great Russian paying-membership must exercise a considerable pull.

Before dealing with the important issue raised by these decisions a few words must be said about the Czech Freethinkers' arrangements for the Congress. These were thorough and admirable, and as hosts they "did us proud." The President of the Republic, M. Benesh, received the Council of the Congress at the Presidential Palace, and generally the British delegation was the recipient of especial consideration and friendliness. The British delegation much regretted that the somewhat abrupt closure of the Congress prevented their giving public and formal expression of their thanks and appreciation to their Czech comrades for all they had done to make the Prague Congress one of especially pleasant memories. I was, therefore, asked to convey to Comrades Voska and Milde the British delegation's thanks. In doing so, I added my own keen regret that illness had prevented the presence in Prague of Mr. Chapman Cohen, our President, who could have so much more authoritatively represented the British Movement.

As to the future of the International, the decision will lie not with us, the delegates to the Congress, but

with the respective Executives of the Freethought bodies in each country. Views will naturally differ greatly on the wisdom of the step so decisively taken. The identification of International Freethought with anti-Fascism must, it seems to me, make the position of the Freethought organizations in semi-Fascist (or, at least, semi-Dictatorial) countries very difficult. Polish comrades, particularly, are in this unfortunate position, and to save their organization they have, I was informed, already left the new International. The Swiss and the Dutch delegates were chagrined at the turn of events, and it was reported, were going to summon their national organizations to consider secession.

I do not know what the reaction of the English Freethought Movement will be to these happenings, and it falls to others to advise. A period of "watchful waiting" may perhaps be called for. This only I will say. It appears to me that wherever Fascism triumphs Freethought is immediately crushed. As Freethought bodies in all countries are by circumstance aligned with other anti-Fascist forces, I venture the entirely personal opinion that we Freethinkers cannot gather our skirts away too meticulously from their propinquity.

One minor matter, but not unimportant in view of the great changes that have taken place. The British Delegation felt that English should be *one* of the official languages of the Congress, and all the organs of the International Union of Freethinkers.

I would like on behalf of all the British delegates again to express our regret at the enforced absence of our President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, from so crucial a Congress of World Freethought. All the British delegates did their best to sustain the British point of view, and (may it not be said) British prestige (a very real thing in Central Europe). But a keener interest and more weighty and authoritative representation is, I suggest, required if British Freethought is to play its rightful part in the International Movement.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

How I got Salvation

(Concluded from page 332)

ANOTHER cleric (No. 3), told us that the story of Jonah in the whale's interior was a very beautiful story, yet people who didn't understand just laughed at it. He said, You know Jonah means Israel, and the fish means Nineveh, and when you read in your Bible that Jonah was three days and three nights in the whale's belly it just means that the Israelites went to Nineveh. It is what you call Allegory, a form of speech. Well! Well! After all the explanation, could a whale swallow Jonah?

No. 4 told us that we could only know the will of God by prayer. God never spoke any louder in the old days than he did now. It was the same still small voice. I had always imagined that when he gave the commandments to Moses he spoke in a loud voice, and when he called to little Samuel, and all the others, but no! it was just the same still small voice.

No. 5 dealt with St. Paul and his visit to Ephesus. You remember that Demetrius made silver shrines which the people worshipped, and naturally he was upset when Paul came preaching this unseen God, and there was a great uproar amongst the people. No. 5 said, "it was the scum of the Jews who caused this uproar." It is always the scum of the Jews who make disturbances. It was the scum of the Jews who started the revolution in Russia. One listener was an advocate of Socialism, and all eyes were turned to him. He said afterwards, "I thought the lost sheep were always wanted, and here is a man of God talking about the scum of the Jews."

No. 6 gave the greatest shock of all. It left us dumbfounded. His subject was, "How we got our

Bible." He said, "After years of discussion those in power at the time said, 'We must give the people a book and tell them it is the word of God.'" He said, "All the books were laid out on a table. The Chairman lifted up *Genesis* and said, 'How many think this is an inspired book?'" The votes were counted, and *Genesis* got enough votes to entitle it to be placed in the book which was to be given to the people as the word of God. *Exodus* was next lifted up, and voted on in the same way, and so on till the end. Five got in "by the skin of their teeth," receiving only one or two votes, namely, *Esther*, *Ecclesiastes*, *Song of Solomon*, *Hebrews*, *Revelations*. I sincerely wish I could convey to you the most awful stillness in the room when this "truth" was given to us. Speaking for myself, I was stricken speechless. I had always thought it was such a sacred book that God had either written it or "breathed on it" himself, and to be told that it was just written by men, and that there was so much doubt about whether it was an inspired book or not. Anyhow, it was stated that the learned council decided that these were *inspired* books, which were to be put together into a book called the Bible, and the people were to be told that this was the word of God. No wonder I smile now when I hear people at the street corners singing, "It is his word his precious word, his word is always true." There was no doubt the Professor noticed the surprised look on all our faces, for he said, in his deep voice, "I don't know how you thought we got our Bible, but these are the facts. Don't take the Bible as your guide. Take Christ as your guide. However, you will find much gold in the Bible, but you'll also find a lot of dross." My difficulty now was to decide which was gold and which was dross. On going home that night a little lady said, "I feel I'm separated from my mother to-night. I feel I cannot tell her what I have heard to-night, and she will be asking what I got." "Oh, why," she said, "do they not tell these things to the people in the pews? Why have we got to come to this college to hear this? I fear they are keeping things back."

After I partly recovered from this shock I decided to take the Professor's advice, and if I were to do missionary work I would preach "Christ and him crucified," but my dilemma was still greater when he informed us that Christ never appeared in the flesh after his death, but only in the spirit. I had always heard it preached, "if Christ had not risen from the dead there would be no hope of a resurrection." Now I was being told it was just in spirit he rose and in spirit did he come to the disciples in the upper room. I felt at this point that my trump card was gone.

No. 7 said some of the miracles he believed, some he didn't, and some he kept an open mind about. He criticized Christian Science as being the work of hysterical people. He criticized Spiritualism. He said, "Death would have more terrors than ever if we lapsed into such a condition as the messages sent would infer." Bad grammar and all.

No. 8 gave us comparative religion. I had always thought that Buddha, Confucius, Mohammed, Zoroaster, were all graven images. Now I heard for the first time they were men, just like Jesus, and they too, each and all of them, said, "I am the son of God." When I heard this, I think the last little bit of orthodox religion slipped from me altogether. He summed up by saying, "Of all these religions no one knew the cry of the human heart like Jesus, who had said that we should meet our loved ones again in Heaven, where there would be no parting." By this time I had grave doubts about this meeting again.

No. 8 was a lady. Her subject was social service. She said, "If you want to lead a full life you must

lose your life in the service of others so that you might find it. There must be a constant inflow and outflow of knowledge, a taking in and a giving out, else one becomes puffed up with the knowledge. One must teach children to be self-reliant. One must help others to help themselves, or, in other words, 'Silver and gold have I none, but such as I have give I unto you.'"

On studying Biology I learned that it was assumed that the first form of life began in the sea in a tiny cell like a jelly-fish called the *Amoeba*; that the forms of life grew and multiplied, that some came on to the land, and some went back into the sea. Some went up trees and some flew about, and so through this period of evolution man has arrived. I compared this with the story of Adam and Eve, and my reason told me in the light of what I had learned that this was more feasible. So in like manner, I evolved from the U.F. Church Training College with my Diploma, determined to leave all creeds and dogmas severely alone, and to make it my motto, "If anyone has need of me, I shall try to help them to the best of my ability."

C. BRYDGES.

The Big Criminal

FOUR young hooligans in America have been electrocuted for murdering a policeman. We read that the night before their execution they had a dinner party together, and were furnished with the "consolations" of the Church. The Church always seems to get a good advertisement in dealing with criminals guilty of the major crimes. These four young toughs had been hoping up to the last minute that they would be reprieved for their callous and cowardly murder of a police officer. One of them, we are told, was the son of a Methodist Lay Preacher. The efficacy of his father's faith does not appear to have been much in evidence in his particular case anyway. These youths prayed as they marched to the electrocution chair. What did they pray for? The repose of the soul of the officer they murdered in cold blood? Or that they might be excused meeting him on the evergreen shore? Or for a retrial of their case before the occupant of the Great White Throne? Or for a triumphal admission to Paradise as marvellous examples of quick conversion? One would suppose that a priest or parson would feel a shrinking reluctance in being sent to offer ministrations to men found guilty on a capital charge. On the contrary, the average priest or parson seems to like it!

Why don't the Churches address themselves to the task of finding out the root causes of that depravity that sets so little store by the value and sanctity of human life? Murder whether of an individual or an army corps is always murder. What hope is there for the world with so many people of that irresponsible temperament floating around?

The Churches have proved their helplessness so clearly that the average man in the street has ceased to look to them for any assistance in securing the reforms essential to the advancement of Peace and Freedom. The Established Churches in particular, are never to be found championing anything unpopular. No doubt when in difficulty the priests and parsons wrestle a lot in prayer—it impresses the unthinking vacant minds—but when Jenkins—in the person of the statesman who has the backing of the majority of the populace—says, "Thumbs down!" down go the thumbs of these reverend gentlemen to the extent of 99 per cent!

The Churches are nourishers of hate when they should be starving it. A Church will spend an unconscionable time in quarrelling over some piffling question such as whether prayers should be written or extempore; whether a cassock should be blue or black; or whether certain words should be chanted while one is looking to the East or not. Similarly in the matter of social habits and customs, it is the potty little transgressions against which the heavy artillery of the pulpits is directed—e.g., a man gets inebriated or is found putting a bob on a horse or in a football pool, or heard sending somebody or something to Hell or Halifax. What shocks and shudders go through the sanctified frames of the men of God! What pain is theirs! Oh, this terrible demoralization of drink, betting and swearing! And immorality and impurity! Alas, my beloved brethren, we are forced to believe it! And the beginnings are so small; but once the sluice gates are open to passion, what are the terrible results?

And then the Holy Sabbath Day—how it is desecrated—even by some who name the name of Christ! Name of a name, isn't it awful? It has been known that even on Sunday evenings host and guests in private houses join in such poisonous card-games as rummy or nap or solo, while they imbibe destructive beer and whisky! In many a believer's house the Bible is neglected. It is seldom opened unless a birth, marriage or death has to be recorded therein; and the person who takes it off the shelf or from under the table defiles himself with the dust of months. Oh, for the glorious days of old, when in the believer's home no profane literature or discourse or singing or play was permitted on the Sabbath!

These are the low and squalid conceptions of duty which are held by the average parson of to-day. He cannot rise to higher things because he is held down by Church-patronized Miss Dora and Mrs. Grundy. Look back into history and contemplate the figures who, cribbed and cabined by the conventional creeds, escaped from the bondage of supernaturalism, and stood forth as champions of the Truth wherever it might be found! They refused to continue as mumbler of outworn creeds and as Nosey Parkers. They realized that such methods could do nothing to banish humanity's greatest ills—to cope with the major crimes which are represented as "Great Dramas,"—the perpetrators of which are too often regarded as heroes! Let the Churches turn their attention to the causes of palpable social diseases and stop pottering among the puerile peccadilloes inevitably associated with human growth! But what is the use of regarding the Churches as potential agencies for social betterment in the real sense? Their past history condemns them; and the hopes of the future are bound up with the abolition of clericalism.

IGNOTUS.

INTELLIGENT ANTICIPATION

Of Mrs. Mandell Creighton, whose death at an advanced age is announced, one of the most famous stories of the late Victorian era used to be told.

At the time her husband was Bishop of Peterborough. It was confidently rumoured that he had been offered the Bishopric of London. A journalist was sent to the Palace at Peterborough to ask if it were true that Dr. Creighton was to be Bishop of London. He was received by a daughter, to whom he put the question. "I really don't know," was the reply. "Father is upstairs praying for guidance, but mother is packing the things." Dr. Creighton accepted London.

Sunday Press.

The Baleful Influence of the Priesthood

In *The Life of Tim Healy*, by Liam O'Flaherty, is tragically revealed the baleful influence exercised by the priesthood over the generality of the people of Ireland in the closing quarter of the last century—if, indeed, it is not still very much the same to-day.

Healy's career is closely entwined with that of Parnell.

Following the O'Shea divorce case, with Parnell as the co-respondent, the Irish Party, together with the priesthood, pledged their continued support to Parnell. Very prominent in this connexion was Bishop Nulty. Then came Gladstone's objection to Parnell remaining the leader of the Irish Party, and a complete transformation in the clerical attitude was the immediate result.

Enthusiastic support gave way to bitter hostility.

Again to the fore in this right-about was Bishop Nulty. Not, of course, had there been the least change in the morality or immorality of Parnell's part in the O'Shea matter. That necessarily remained just the same. Wholly material or political, therefore, were the promptings that turned the Bishop from a friend into an enemy.

O'Flaherty gives the following extracts from a pastoral which Bishop Nulty promptly issued, with instructions that it was to be read in every church:—

"Parnellism, like many of the great rebellious movements which heresy has from time to time raised against the church, sprung from the root of sensualism and sin.

"He would approach the death-bed of a profligate or drunkard with greater confidence in his salvation than that of a Parnellite.

"The women who had the least Parnellite sympathies were worse than abandoned women.

"Parnellism is in distinct, direct, and essential antagonism with the principles of Christian morality, and dangerous to their faith as Catholics.

"Parnellism, like Paganism, impedes, obstructs, and cripples the efficiency, and blights the fruitfulness of the teaching of the Gospel.

"The dying Parnellite will hardly dare to face the justice of his Creator."

O'Flaherty goes on to say that "in obedience to the Bishop—and eager to go farther than he did, possibly hoping some day to be bishops themselves—the inferior clerics issued further ultimatums."

For example:—

"The Rev. George Buchanan insisted on refusing the Sacraments to a dying boy until he made an admission that Parnellism was a sin.

"The Rev. John Fay described the Parnellites as followers of Garibaldi, and said that he would not forgive anyone who voted for them now or for ever.

"The Rev. Patrick Cantwell, after reading the pastoral from the pulpit, declared, 'You cannot, after hearing that, remain Parnellites and Catholics.'

"The Rev. Thomas Tynan said to a voter, 'You ought to vote for your religion, and not give your priests a slap in the face. I won't attend you with the Blessed Sacrament when you are dying, but leave you to your conscience.'

"A man named Barry had presided at a meeting in support of Dalton (the Parnellite candidate). This man was denounced by the reverend gentleman from the altar at Coole. His mother was in the chapel; and when the priest said the Parnellites would be damned, this poor worshipper got up and interrupted him with the cry, 'Oh, no, Father—not if they repent.' The mother of the young man had to be borne out of the chapel when the clergyman denouncing her son said he would not forget it of him.

"The Rev. Patrick O'Connell said, 'No Parnellites are justified in approaching the Sacraments. There will be an anti-Parnellite meeting at Clonard to-day. Those who wilfully absent themselves I will meet in their homes, and in the by-ways, and I will make them remember it. I will set fire to their heels and their toes. I will remember it at the altar rails and in the confessional.'

"On Tuesday, July 10, the Chapel gates were shut, and all Parnellites at Clonard were prevented from hearing Mass."

Sufficient have we, with this, to show what a curse has been the priesthood to Ireland. It need scarcely be said that, compared with numbers of the Popes in earlier years, Parnell was a saint of saints. What should particularly interest us here is the concrete example we are afforded by O'Flaherty of the depth to which the church has been prepared to resort—by abuse on the one hand, and threats on the other—in furtherance of its own worldly ends.

Parnell, by the way, was born in Ireland, and educated in England.

O'Shea filed his petition for a divorce in 1889. Parnell did not defend the suit. In June, 1891, he married Mrs. O'Shea. He died in October the same year.

"Meath," says O'Flaherty, writing of Parnell after he had fallen foul of the priesthood, and when Healy was in opposition to him, "had been the first constituency in Ireland to elect Parnell to the English Parliament. For that reason, the Papal forces made a special attack on it, under the command of Tim Healy. They succeeded in getting two candidates elected, one of whom was Michael Davitt, a man reputed to be a Socialist. However, the methods of the Papacy during the election were so outrageously scandalous that a petition was lodged, and both the Papal candidates were unseated."

I can't close without expressing my admiration of the forthright way in which O'Flaherty expresses his own religious views.

"An ambitious man, even though he be a scoundrel," he says, "is better for a community than a whole brood of monks who sit, with their arms hidden in their sleeves, contemplating their navels."

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Correspondence

SHELL AS SATELLITES?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In your issue of the Freethinker of the 10th instant, a paragraph appeared to the effect that the eminent Engineer, Sir Robert Hadfield, had invented a gun firing a shell with a velocity of 1,200 miles per minute. Surely there is a grave error here. Such velocity is vastly higher than the "parabolic velocity," or "velocity of escape," as it is called, of 417 miles per hour (6.9 miles per second) which, if exceeded, overcomes terrestrial gravitation and causes the body to fly off into space.

If the countless millions of projectiles fired during the Great War had a velocity even remotely approaching the alleged one of 1,200 miles per minute, swarms of them would to-day be rushing round the globe as satellites, and would continue to do so for untold ages. Many of those fired during the early years of the war in the equatorial regions at high angles of elevation—for instance at air-craft—being aligned more or less in the plane of the ecliptic, might well have "hit" the moon and planets, while others passing these by, would by now have completed a radial distance from the earth of over ten thousand million miles, and be beyond the confines of the orbit of the outermost member of our solar system, Pluto.

CHARLES M. BEADNELL.

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS

SIR,—Can you get your contributor, Mr. Llewelyn Powys, to favour us with one or two concrete examples of "The teachings of Jesus," which he says have been "of the greatest value to human civilization"?

In my opinion the teachings of Jesus have been the greatest barrier to human civilization, but evidence to the contrary might change the whole course of my intellectual outlook.

EDWD. C. SAPHIN.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD ON MAY 21, 1936

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Quinton, Rosetti (A. C.), Clifton, Saphin, Tuson, Silvester, Ebury, Preece, Sandys, Mrs. Grant, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and confirmed. Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Newcastle, Liverpool, Leeds, West London, North London, and Parent Society. Correspondence was dealt with from Preston, Blackburn, Glasgow, and London districts. Lecture reports from Messrs. Brighton, Clayton and Whitehead were presented. The President read the Executive's Annual Report to be presented to the forthcoming Conference, which was finally adopted. Details in connexion with the Conference were reported and approved. The Chairman expressed his opinion that the prospects of a well attended, and successful Conference at Whit-Sun were exceptionally good, and that a meeting of the new Executive, to be elected by the Conference would be called in due course. The meeting then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall): 8.0, Tuesday, June 2, Mr. E. C. Smith. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, June 5, Mr. L. Ebury.

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Mr. P. Goldman.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner): 8.0, Wednesday, June 3, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Wood, Evans and Tuson. 6.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant, Wood, Evans and Tuson. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant, Wood and Tuson. Thursday, 7.30, Mr. E. Saphin. *Freethinker* on sale at Kiosk. Should be ordered in advance to avoid disappointment.

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR.

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Well Lane): 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. D. Robinson. Literature on sale.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.30, Mr. Whitehead will speak on May 28, 29, 30, and 31, at 7.30.

ARMS AND THE CLERGY

BY

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

Price 1s. By post 1s. 2d. Cloth, gilt, by post 2s. 3d.

The Pioneer Press,
61 Farringdon Street, London,
E.C.4

MOTHER OF GOD

BY
G. W. FOOTE

Post Free 2½d.

THE MIRACLES OF ST. MARTIN

BY
C. CLAYTON DOYE

Price post free 7d.

BRADLAUGH AND INGERSOLL

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN

Price 2s. 6d. Postage 3d.

SELECTED HERESIES

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN

Cloth, Gilt 3s. 6d. Postage 3d.

Footsteps of the Past

BY
J. M. WHEELER

Price 3s. 6d. Postage 3d.

Letters To a Country Vicar

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN

Paper 1s. Postage 2d. Cloth, gilt 2s. Postage 3d.

ACADEMY CINEMA,

Oxford Street. Ger. 2981

The Swiss Psychological drama

"DIE EWIGE MASKE" (The Eternal Mask) (A)

A striking study in psycho-analysis

UNWANTED CHILDREN

In a Civilized Community there should be no UNWANTED Children.

An Abridged List (16 pages) of Birth Control Requisites and Books sent post free for a 1½d. stamp.

J. R. HOLMES, East Hanney, Wantage, Berks.

ESTABLISHED NEARLY HALF A CENTURY

The Secular Society Ltd.,

CHAIRMAN : CHAPMAN COHEN

Company Limited by Guarantee.

Registered Office: 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4
Secretary: R. H. ROSETTI.

THIS Society was formed in 1898 to afford legal security to the acquisition and application of funds for Secular purposes.

The Memorandum of Association sets forth that the Society's Objects are :—To promote the principle that human conduct should be based upon natural knowledge, and not upon supernatural belief, and that human welfare in this world is the proper end of all thought and action. To promote freedom of enquiry. To promote universal Secular Education. To promote the complete secularization of the State, etc. And to do all such lawful things as are conducive to such objects. Also to have, hold, receive, and retain any sums of money paid, given, devised, or bequeathed by any person, and to employ the same for any of the purposes of the Society.

Members pay an entrance fee of ten shillings, and a subsequent yearly subscription of five shillings.

The liability of members is limited to £1, in case the Society should ever be wound up.

All who join the Society participate in the control of its business and the trusteeship of its resources. It is expressly provided in the Articles of Association that no member, as such, shall derive any sort of profit from the Society, either by way of dividend, bonus, or interest.

The Society's affairs are managed by an elected Board of Directors, one-third of whom retire (by ballot), each year, but are eligible for re-election.

Friends desiring to benefit the Society are invited to make donations, or to insert a bequest in the Society's favour in their wills. The now historic decision of the House of Lords in *re Bowman and Others v. the Secular Society, Limited*, in 1917, a verbatim report of which may be obtained from its publishers, the Pioneer Press, or from the Secretary, makes it quite impossible to set aside such bequests.

A Form of Bequest.—The following is a sufficient form of bequest for insertion in the wills of testators :—

I give and bequeath to the Secular Society, Limited, the sum of £ free from Legacy Duty, and I direct that a receipt signed by two members of the Board of the said Society and the Secretary thereof shall be a good discharge to my Executors for the said Legacy.

It is advisable, but not necessary, that the Secretary should be formally notified of such bequests, as wills sometimes get lost or mislaid. A form of membership, with full particulars, will be sent on application to the Secretary, R. H. ROSETTI, 68 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4.

Paganism in Christian Festivals

BY
J. M. WHEELER

Price 1s. Postage 1½d.

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

BY
CHAPMAN COHEN

With a Reply by Professor A. S. Eddington

SECOND EDITION

Paper 2s. Postage 2d. Cloth 3s. Postage 3d.

NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

A Public Demonstration

IN THE

CONWAY HALL, Red Lion Square, HOLBORN, W.C.1

Whit-Sunday, May 31st, 1936

Chairman: CHAPMAN COHEN

(President N.S.S.)

SPEAKERS:

Dr. C. H. R. Carmichael, J. T. Brighton, E. C. Saphin,
G. Bedborough, L. Ebury, J. Clayton, R. H. Rosetti,
and Others

ADMISSION? FREE
Doors Open 6.30 p.m.

Reserved Seats One Shilling each
Commence 7.0 p.m.

Historical Jesus and the Mythical Christ

BY
GERALD MASSEY

Price 6d

Postage 1d.

HUMANITY AND WAR

By

CHAPMAN COHEN

N.S.S CONFERENCE

A Social Gathering of Members and Delegates
will be held in

Anderton's Hotel,
FLEET ST., E.C.4

Saturday, May 30th, 1936

Commence at 7 p.m.

REFRESHMENTS

MUSIC

Forty pages, with cover. THREEPENCE,
postage 1d. extra. This is a Freethinker's
view of the whole subject of war, fearlessly
and simply expressed. In order to assist
in its circulation eight copies will be sent
for Two Shillings postage paid. Terms
for larger quantities on application.

Send at once for a Supply

Issued for the Secular Society, Limited, by
the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon St., E.C.4
LONDON