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Views and Opinions

Freethought and Communism

I TRUST that what has been said concerning the attitude of the N.S.S. to a "Common Front" will clear up any misunderstanding that may exist. We need no persuasion to adopt it because a Common Front has always been part of our policy. But when we are invited to join a Common Front, and find that instead of this meaning a sinking of differences in order to achieve an agreed end, it involves agreement in the advocacy of a policy with which our organization, as such, has nothing to do, the Common Front looks like absorption of one party by another. The programme savours too strongly of a political party whose principles vary as self-interest dictates. And life would be very poor indeed if it held nothing higher or better than the shifty practices and crafty dishonesties of the political world. The N.S.S. does not avow one thing in principle and disavow it in practice. It cannot be bribed, but neither can it be fooled. We do not, in taking this stand, say that political action is of no consequence, but simply that it lies outside our organization. It is, of course, open for anyone to say that we ought to take part in political action; but it is not consonant with honest dealing and self-respect to gain support—financial and otherwise—for one set of aims, and then utilize the support given for other aims. In ordinary life that is called obtaining things under false pretences. Thus when Mr. Lindsay asks (*Freethinker*, July 1936) whether the N.S.S. cannot subscribe to a policy (1) the separation of religion from the State, (2) the closing of churches by a majority vote of the people in the district in which the churches are situated, alternative churches to be opened within a three-mile radius should a vote demand them, (3) the separation of religious instruction from education, and (4) the freedom of all citizens to follow whatever religion they choose, the answer is, Yes, to numbers one and four, Yes, also to number three, provided the rule

applies only to the State lending help of any kind to the giving of religious education, No, to number 2. We have always worked for the complete separation of all religion from the State, and we are ready to join hands with anyone in accomplishing these purposes. His political and religious opinions, apart from these objects, will not concern us at all. But we also hold that while it is not the business of the State to support religion, neither is it its business to persecute it. Settling by a vote the question of whether a given number of people shall worship in a Church is ridiculous. Put this policy into operation in this country, by religious people, and no gathering of Freethinkers would be permitted. Belief is not a thing to be settled by a vote, nor is the truth of a teaching to be decided by counting noses. If language is to have a definite meaning, freedom for every citizen to follow whatever religion he pleases must mean that the same rights of meeting, expression of opinion, and teaching shall exist for everyone, with equal protection in the exercise of these rights. This has always been the policy of the N.S.S., and so long as I continue President it will remain so.

In making this position quite clear I have said all that is really material to the point raised by Mr. Lindsay. We are always ready to join hands in a genuinely common front. If others are sectarian enough to refuse help because we will not bind ourselves to the advocacy of things that lie outside the Society's scope, a policy that is strongly reminiscent of "There is no name under heaven save that of Christ Jesus by which men may be saved," then they must pursue their "egotistical" and "sectarian" policy alone. The N.S.S. does not bar its members from pursuing any political or sociological policy they please, so long as it does not conflict with the principles and objects of the Society, and not only is the vast majority of Freethinkers keenly interested in political and sociological questions, but it is among Freethinkers that most advanced political and economic policies have had their rise. The "common enemy" recognizes this in the opposition that he has always shown to Freethought.

* * *

Is Communism Essential?

I think I have now said all that is actually necessary to make clear the position of the N.S.S. But I do not wish even to appear to treat Mr. Lindsay curtly, or scurvily, or to give the impression that if what is said is passed in silence, then judgment against us must go by default. And here I may say that I quite fail to see the pertinency—in relation to the issue raised—of the criticism passed on J. M. Robertson and Sir Arthur Keith. Assuming Mr. Lindsay's opinion of these two to be quite justified, they are found guilty of a charge with which we as an organization have nothing to do. Neither of the two were

members of the N.S.S., and if they were they are indicted on counts with which the Freethought Movement has nothing to do. Personally, I thought Sir Arthur Keith's criticism of the Race question in his review of *W'e Europeans*, a particularly unenlightened and quite unscientific piece of writing, but if he had been a member of the N.S.S., and any one had raised the question in Committee or at the Annual Conference, I should have ruled it out of order, just as I should rule out of order an attack on Communism. It is a curious conception of freedom that will permit a man to speak when he is right, but is not equally careful of guarding his right to speak when he is wrong. It is this last that needs carefully guarding. The first is admitted by the Roman Church, and by every brand of Fascism.

Mr. Lindsay argues that if we are against Fascism and religion, we ought to take sides with Marxian Communism, or we may wake up one of these days and find our hard-won liberties destroyed. I admit the danger; I also admit the extent to which established interests are coquetting with Fascism, and have dwelt constantly upon both points; and for many years the *Freethinker* has insisted upon the danger of the education that was being given the public mind in the encouragement to disturbance of public meetings, by members of both the "left" and the "right." The result of that education on the public mind by familiarizing it with disorderly meetings, and on the official mind by encouraging that tendency to interference with individual freedom that seems inherent in every kind of officialdom, has quite warranted all that we have said. The public mind does not act individually, but collectively, and the direction of mass mentality is mainly determined by the kind of special environmental influences that have been created.

But Mr. Lindsay has seen fit to make his appeal for a "Common Front" a plea for the adoption of Marxian Communism, and with the soundness or unsoundness of that theory we have nothing to do, except so far as it affects the special principles for which we stand. In commenting upon this part of Mr. Lindsay's essay, I must ask the patience of my readers in dealing with the first principles submitted. Mr. Lindsay lays down certain principles and assumes, rather than proves, that if we admit these principles Marxian Communism follows as a matter of course. My difficulty here is that many of the principles stated may be admitted, but I do not see that Marxian Communism necessarily follows. They strike me as principles of logical method or statements of the laws governing social aggregates, and while they may be used to justify Marxian Communism, they may as easily be used to justify some other form of sociological theory.

I would also have agreed with much of what Mr. Lindsay says concerning the evils of the present economic system, and also the tricks and practices to which those in power will resort to maintain their position and power. With regard to the first, I do not think that words can condemn too strongly the faults of a system under which the enormous increase in the power to produce food results in hunger, the ability to manufacture more clothes than can be worn results in people being badly clad, and when no better way of cultivating friendly relations with one's neighbour can be devised than that of getting ready to drop explosive bombs on him.

And with regard to the second point, my distrust of vested interests (not necessarily financial interests) goes deeper even than that of Mr. Lindsay. For I distrust every official class, big or little, Conservative, Liberal, Socialistic, Fascistic or Communistic, and

assert the imperative need of encouraging the development of a critical and independent public opinion so that this official interest may be kept in order. The moment we have a governing body—and I am afraid we shall have to put up with one for so long that consideration of what will happen in its absence is not "practical politics"—that governing body will fight for its own continuation. The law of self-preservation applies to corporations as well as to individuals. It is not always a monetary interest that is in question. Position, power, distinction, ranging from a small committee to Prime Minister, will operate, and it is in relation to this vital sociological fact that the principle of freedom of thought, speech and publication is always of vital interest to the progressive well-being of society.

As is customary with those who attack what they call abstract thinking, it generally happens that they are actually thinking in abstractions all the time, a procedure which is camouflaged by the appeal to concrete facts in support of their metaphysical view. For, example, I share Mr. Lindsay's admiration for the acuteness of Marx's analysis of the ideal capitalistic society—although, I must guard myself by admitting that economics is not my "long suit." Marx was doing what every scientist does, that is, isolating a special phenomenon from its associations, in order to study its native tendencies. But the tendencies of any system studied in this way, are not quite those which it exhibits in practice. Other factors then operate which may either modify or exaggerate the essential features of the isolated system we are examining. It is quite true, when we isolate a feather and a piece of lead, that if we drop both inside a closed tube they will reach the ground together. But in actual life they never do anything of the kind, and the man who backs the piece of lead will win every time. In practice other factors come into operation. The theoretical and actual consequences of a given situation seldom agree. And when one studies the economic situation, not in the abstract, but in the concrete, we get, not the inherent tendencies of a system, but those tendencies modified by a number of other things. The capitalist is not always determined in his actions by the desire for more and more profit; and on the other side of the ledger it does not happen that, measured in terms of economic necessity, there is as Marx forecast, "increasing poverty, misery, enslavement, degeneration" among the "proletariat." Both employer and employee are moved by motives and considerations that do not logically follow from their "class" positions. This would not be the case if capitalism operated in *vacuo*, but in the same circumstances a feather would reach the ground at the same time as a lump of lead. In life we must reckon with things as they are; as Mr. Lindsay says, we must be concrete in our thinking, and not lose ourselves in abstractions.

I do not mean, of course, that the employee is getting all he ought to get out of the increased wealth—mental and physical—that society has acquired, and which, as I have so often said, we ought to regard as in the nature of a social heritage in which all should share. But I think it of first-rate importance to bear in mind that it is *not* in the name of increasing misery and degeneration, and degradation, and poverty, that the working-classes are asking for a better share in the life of to-day. They ask for this, and it is well they should, in the name of the *desire* for greater leisure, luxury, greater freedom from economic pressure, because of the fact that their general condition is better than was that of their forbears. To-day the most hopeful feature is that the fight is not so much for the satisfaction of mere ani-

mal needs as it is for the gratification of desires, and I agree with those who say that if these demands are granted, more will be asked for to-morrow. That is the most hopeful feature of the situation. I should build very little on a hungry man crying for food or shelter. My dog will whine when he is hungry for food, and will crawl to the fire when he feels cold. The demands of the intelligent working-class is for more than the satisfaction of hunger and of shelter from the cold. The desire for better things has been excited, and that indicates growth. And however inadequate is the share of our social wealth that has fallen to the working-man, it is the fact that he has tasted of things of which his grandparents would hardly have dared dream that lies at the root of the splendid unrest of to-day.

I emphasize these things because I do not wish it to be thought that we are blind to those aspects of the situation that do not directly come within the scope of the work of the N.S.S. The work of the early Freethinkers is bearing its natural fruit. They knew that the surest way of doing away with social evils was to create a desire for something better. The ultimate justification for giving to man a larger share in the mental and cultural wealth of society is that it shall create a demand for more. The value of intelligent discontent cannot easily be over-estimated. I agree with all that anyone can say as to the national scandal that, in a society which has increased so largely in every kind of wealth, we should find a Government discussing whether working-men who are out of employment, through no fault of their own, should live on a five-shilling or a four and tenpenny diet per week, and that whether a man and woman should have children or not is often determined by the question of whether their little bodies can be clothed and fed. But the prospect would be infinitely worse if the unrest existing were due to nothing more than a number of hungry, ill-fed slaves crying out for more food and clothing. That kind of discontent could be satisfied by a few extra bones thrown to the crowd. As I see the problem, the unrest of the time is fundamentally healthy because it cannot be bought off in this manner, and it cannot be so bought off because it is based fundamentally on a higher conception of human nature and of human dignity than formerly ruled.

I do not expect that Mr. Lindsay will seriously disagree with a great deal of what I have said. But I think we are neither writing wholly for each other. We have another and a larger purpose in view.

(To be continued)

CHAPMAN COHEN.

THE CRUSADES

This was not Europe. This was hell if ever there was one. This was the blackest of hells, for all was blackness. Might was right. Outlawry was legal, sublime, religious. To slay was sanctity. The sword became the Cross. The fagot fired their hearts. The rack and dungeon gave them funds. The gibbet gave them power, renown. The sword gave them chivalry, the lance, knighthood, the axe, heaven. When the sword cut the limbs, the monk cried, *Dieu le Vent*. When the lance pierced the human heart, the monk cried, *Dieu le Vent*. When the axe severed the heads, the monks cried, *Dieu le Vent*. This plague of murder and destruction covered every crevice and corner of Europe until the nations swam in blood. And above all could be seen the pious priest, knee-deep in a vat of redness, soaked with the greasy fluid holding high his cross, shouting still his hellish cry, *Dieu le Vent*.

L. A. Reitmeister in "Paradise Found."

An Atheist at Large

"Chewing the cud of sweet and bitter fancy."

Shakespeare.

"Reading maketh a full man."--Bacon.

OWING to industrial upheavals on the Continent, English folk have again been restricted in their pleasurable search for holiday resorts. Curiously, it has grown the fashion to decry home seaside-places and to puff-up extravagantly all sorts and conditions of Continental towns. Yet something is still to be said in favour of the more popular English coast-towns, for their history and attractions are entwined with the life of our nation, and the feet of some of the most eminent sons and daughters of old England trod their streets, beaches, and promenades.

Brighton, populous and pebbly, for example, was loved by Thackeray, who made the dissolute bucks of the Regency revisit the glimpses of the moon. Hither went Herbert Spencer, one of the most princely intellects England has produced, and George Jacob Holyoake, a brave soldier of Freedom. Edward Carpenter, the austere apostle of Democracy, enjoyed himself dreamily on Brighton front, and on the breezy downs behind the town, but he was bored at socials and parties. Quite near, at Rottingdean, lived Rudyard Kipling, and no poet has been more rapturous in his praise of Sussex by the Sea.

Sunny and shrimpy Margate was loved by the great artist Turner, who came to the place as a jolly schoolboy, and promptly fell in love with a chum's sister. Thither went John Ruskin later to see the glorious reality of Turner's magic skies. It was the old Margate hoy which roused the interest of that inveterate old Londoner, Charles Lamb, who, with his sister, Mary, spent a holiday there. They visited Hastings, Worthing, Brighton and Eastbourne on other occasions, but Margate always held the first place in their affections. Neighbouring Ramsgate, with its old-world harbour, was the home of Thomas Scott, the very prince of pamphleteers, and it attracted Heinrich Heine, when the poet was depressed by the noise of the great Metropolis. High up on a balcony on the West Cliff he found rest in the joyous music of the waves. The coastline of this favoured part of England, from Ramsgate to Herne Bay, is crowded with associations of Cowper, Dickens, Keats and Gray. Dante Gabriel Rossetti is buried in Birchington Churchyard, and many pilgrims, who do not often trouble the pew-openers, visit the little church to see the famous memorial window.

Shoreham is a veritable link with the past. Through here passed Charles Stewart Parnell, the Irish leader, and Kitty O'Shea on their way to their secret marriage; Lily Langtry, "the Jersey lily"; De Rougemont, who hoaxed the world with stories of his bogus explorations in the Southern Seas; Tom Sayers, the pugilist; Mary Lloyd, the queen of the music-halls. George Moore knew Shoreham, and one of his very best novels, *Esther Waters*, owes much of its local colour to the town and neighbourhood. It was to the old Dolphin Inn that Charles the Second fled after his crushing defeat at Worcester by Cromwell. But one of the strangest characters was Phoebe Hessel, a street hawker, who actually enlisted in the Fusiliers in order to be with her lover, and served with him in the campaigns abroad.

When old and dying, Gladstone went to Bournemouth in the hope that the fine air might be a palliative, and that bright, particular genius, Robert Louis Stevenson, resided there for three years. At Boscombe, near Bournemouth, lived "Shelley's Mary," who resided with her son, Sir Percy Shelley. Indeed,

Boscombe is crowded with Shelley relics, and the neighbouring Christchurch, it is ironical to remember, is actually famous for its splendid marble memorial of the Atheist poet. To St. Leonard's Thomas Carlyle took his wife when she was suffering in health, and the great writer found the sea and the Sussex lanes full of consolation when nigh all else was but dust and ashes in his mouth.

Portsmouth has many associations with naval history, and there is much to interest admirers of Charles Dickens, who has, truth to tell, linked his name to so many seaside towns from Yarmouth to Southsea. People affect a high-sniffing contempt for Southend-on-Sea, but the broad expanse of the Thames estuary, with its marvellous sunrises and sunsets, has found favour with generations of artists from Turner to Wyllie. Edwin Arnold, the much-travelled author of *The Light of Asia*, and Robert Buchanan, poet and dramatist, delighted in the town, both being tenants of the famous house, "Hamlet Court," at different periods. Lord Beaconsfield, when Benjamin Disraeli, stayed at an old Tudor mansion, "Porter's Grange," whose front door was riddled with Cromwellian bullets, and was rapturous in its praise. "There is no finer place," he wrote to his sister Louise, "when the spring becomes a certainty." G. W. Foote, the first editor of the *Freethinker*, lived at Westcliff for years, and said that his only regret was that he did not go there earlier. Thomas Hardy and Eden Phillpotts have revived the glories of the West Country, and Clement Scott's generous praise of the "Garden of Sleep," made Cromer and her sister-towns blossom like the rose. The plain truth is, the beaten track has its genuine claim, and it is none the worse for being in our own country and frequented by our own kin.

In revisiting the scenes of former glories it is as well not to lay the praise on "with a trowel." Eden Phillpotts lived at a beautiful house at Torquay, and an enthusiastic lady visitor burst into rapture and adjectives, and said: "How lovely this spot is. It is so Swiss." "Yes, dear lady," calmly said the great novelist, "it is very Swiss; only there is no sea in Switzerland, and there are no mountains here."

Fame, too, is a very tender plant. I was standing by Robert Buchanan's tomb, which is one of the most important at St. John's Churchyard, Southend-on-Sea, when a party of visitors arrived. A female voice piped: "It's a fine monument, my dear, but you know these distillers are such wealthy people." What a tribute to "Robert the Devil!" as he used to be called. A still more glaring case occurs on the fringe of the Great Metropolis. A road is named after the illustrious French artist, Gustave Doré. None of its seven hundred innocent suburban inhabitants ever heard of the famous Frenchman, or Gallic art, and the thoroughfare is known locally as if it were spelled "Door." Let no man presume upon his reputation, for, not infrequently, it resembles military glory, which Byron said, sarcastically, meant sometimes that the unfortunate man manured a foreign field, and had his name spelt wrong in the newspapers. "Fame is, after all, rude handling, and a name that is often on men's lips seems to borrow something not to be desired, as paper money that passes from hand to hand." So said Oliver Wendell Holmes, a charming and cultured writer, who carried a weight of learning lightly.

MIMNERMUS.

Hell is a dark and bottomless pit, full of fire and brimstone.—*Wesleyan Catechism*.

The Church in Spain

(From *Creed and Character*, by Chapman Cohen)

"Our religious denominations are showing the utmost sympathy for Roman Catholics in this hour of their anguish, recognizing the noble work their Church has done in this country (Spain)."—Leading article in the *Daily Mail* for August 5.

PRE-MOHAMMEDAN Spain need not long detain us. Under Christian rule it presented much the same picture of decay, corruption, and brutality that overtook the Roman Empire on its passing under Christianity. But a different story commences with the Mohammedan occupation of the country in the eighth century. Landing in the South, the Mohammedans rapidly subdued nearly the whole of the country; and the speed and ease with which this was done argues little defence on the part of the people. The disaffected retreated to the mountainous region of the north-west, and maintained a warfare against the invaders. Gradually they regained portions of the country, until the conquest of Granada in 1492 reduced the Moors to the position of subjects where they had once been masters.

So far as the secular life of the people was concerned the Moorish occupation was wholly beneficial. A civilization was established superior to anything that existed in any part of Christendom. More than that, it served as a starting-point for the scientific renaissance in Europe. In fighting the Mohammedan power in Spain the Church was doing more than fighting an alien religion. It was trying to strangle modern science in its cradle.

When one bears in mind the condition of contemporary Christendom, the story of the Mohammedan civilization in Spain reads more like romance than a record of fact. Starting with the culture of Greece and Rome as a basis, science underwent rapid, almost startling, developments. Draper's catalogue of the scientific achievements of the Moors in Spain may need carefully checking, but a deal of it stands beyond question. In medicine and surgery the Moors and the Jews gave the only improvements since the closing of the Greek and Egyptian schools, and their influence led to the founding of the first medical schools in Christendom. In optics they corrected many of the current misconceptions concerning the nature of light, and discussed the true nature of refraction. They applied mathematics to astronomy and physics, developed algebra—the name is itself a confession of its origin—raised chemistry to a science, were the first to build observatories in Europe, introduced the mariner's compass, and added the invaluable cipher to our numerals. As early as the ninth century they were teaching astronomy by the use of globes. Seven centuries later the Christians were denouncing Copernicus, burning Bruno, and imprisoning Galileo for teaching what had been familiar to the Spanish Moors for the better part of a thousand years.

The Mohammedan cities were well built, cleanly, solidly paved, and well lit. In point of sanitation they were probably superior to the Spain of to-day. Colleges, academies, and gymnasia were in all the towns and cities. Not less than fifty colleges are said to have been in Granada and its environs. Schools were attached to all the mosques, and public libraries possessing many thousands of volumes established. It should also be pointed out that at a time when toleration was unknown in Christendom, Christians and Jews were allowed liberty of worship, were appointed to university posts, and were not prohibited from holding office in the State.

Their commercial and industrial progress was equally striking. On this point I will leave Mr. H. C. Lea to speak. Writing of the Moors in Spain, just prior to their expulsion, he says:—

It was on their industry, moreover, that the prosperity of the State reposed. None of the resources of the State was more relied upon than the revenues which they furnished. . . . They were virtually indispensable to the nobles on whose lands they were settled, for they were most skillful in agriculture, and unwearied in toil. They carried their characteristics into every department of industry, science and art. As physicians they ranked with the Jews, and when, in 1345, the Prior of the Order of Santiago built the Church of Nuestra Señora de Meles, we are told that he assembled "Moorish masters" and good Christian stonemasons, who erected the structure. They were equally skilled in marine architecture, and the Catalan power in the Mediterranean was largely due to their labours. The wonderful system of irrigation by which they converted Valencia into the garden of Europe still exists, with its elaborate and equitable allotment of the waters. They introduced the culture of sugar, silk, cotton, rice, and many other valuable products, and not a spot of ground was left untilled by their indefatigable industry. . . . In all the mechanic arts they were excelled. The potteries of Malaga, the cloths of Murcia, the silks of Almeria and Granada, the leather hangings of Cordova, the weapons of Toledo, were renowned everywhere, and furnished the materials for profitable foreign commerce, which was stimulated by the universal reputation of their merchants for probity and strict fidelity to their engagements, so that it passed into a proverb that the word of a Granadan and the faith of a Castilian would make an Old Christian, or, as the saintly Archbishop of Granada used to say, "They ought to adopt our faith, and we ought to adopt their morals." . . . There were no beggars among them, for they took affectionate care of their own poor and orphans.¹

I have given the barest of hints as to the character of the Spanish Mohammedans, and none whatever of the extent to which modern Europe is indebted to them for its scientific rebirth. It remains to be seen how the country fared under the dominating and unchecked power of the Christian Church. The fall of Granada, in 1492, finally gave the control of the country definitely into Christian hands. And it was not long before the Church set to work. When Granada and other Moorish places were surrendered, solemn stipulations had been made concerning the maintenance of the Mohammedan religion. The terms of surrender permitted the Moors "to live in their laws and faith, and to be judged according to the *Zunna*, or Moorish code; it declares their houses inviolate against forcible entry or the free quartering of soldiers; it guarantees them possession of their horses and arms, and that they shall never be permitted to wear badges. . . . No constraint was to be applied to the Moors to induce conversion. . . . All the revenues of mosques, and schools, and charitable foundations were to be maintained and paid, as usual, into the hands of the *Alfaiques*." These conditions were sworn to by both Ferdinand and Isabella "In the name of God."

But the Church paid no attention to "scraps of paper" where heretics were concerned, and it was soon seen that conversion or extermination was the ultimate choice before the Moors. The great leader here was the famous Ximenes, Archbishop of Toledo. His policy was to harass the Moors into rebellion, and then make conversion the condition of pardon. Ten years after the capitulation, all Moorish males

over fourteen and all females over twelve were ordered to quit the kingdoms of Castile and Leon, the children to be given over to be brought up as Christians. Even had parents been willing thus to sacrifice their children, other regulations made it almost impossible for them to leave. It was reported that large numbers were converted, hundreds being driven together like cattle, and having holy water sprinkled over them.

At Valencia the persecution of the Inquisition led to some of the Moors taking up arms. The revolt was suppressed, and forced conversion secured. At Gúndia this performance was repeated, as at other places. There was a policy behind these wholesale conversions. It gave the Church the excuse to justify later persecution, as it could claim that it was correcting the members of its own flock.

The solemn obligations entered into at the surrender of Granada stood, for some time, in the way. So an appeal was made to the Pope, Clement VII., to annul the solemn oath taken. This he did by issuing a brief on May 12, 1524, reciting his sorrow at so many of the King's subjects not being of the true faith, and exhorting the King (Charles V.) to order the Inquisitors to preach the Gospel to them, with the alternative of slavery or exile if they continued obstinate.

For political reasons Charles did not make the Papal brief public for some eighteen months after its receipt. At the end of that time it was sent to the Inquisitor-General, with instructions to get it into operation as speedily as possible. This was followed by a decree of expulsion. "All the Moors of Valencia were to be out of Spain by December 31, 1525; those of Aragon and Catalonia by January 31, 1526. All Christians, under pain of excommunication, were to assist in the expulsion."

But it was explained to Charles that the industry and commerce of the country rested with the Moors. Even the Churches were dependent upon them for a large part of their revenues. A realization of this led to a revocation of the order of expulsion, but the order for conversion remained. The result of this step, with other regulations, was the conversion of large numbers of Moors. One priest boasted that in Valencia alone he had baptized 27,000 families. Some of the Moors resisted with force this wholesale conversion, but in the end the whole of the Moors—or Moriscoes, as they were called after their conversion—became nominally Christian, and became formally members of the Church, subject to its discipline and correction.

The Moriscoes, says Mr. Lea, were defenceless, and everyone, cleric and layman, pillaged them systematically. In Granada, in 1566, an edict was published ordering all Moriscoes to learn Castilian within three years, after which no one was to read, write, or speak Arabic. Moorish names were abolished, and all Moorish baths, public and private, were to be destroyed. Cleanliness, a marked feature of the Moors, became a crime, and Mr. Lea mentions a case in which this was held presumptive evidence of having lapsed into Mohammedanism. Mr. Lea supplies numerous illustrations of the trivial charges on which Moriscoes were condemned, and as confiscation of property to the Church followed conviction, the Inquisition had a very solid reason for its activity.

(To be concluded)

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Christian converts are generally children.

G. A. Dorsey.

¹ *Moriscoes in Spain*, pp. 6-7.

Honesty

FROM the first syllable of recorded time down to the present, the people of this world have been, at their best, indifferent honest.

Groups of men have herded together for defensive purposes, but whenever opportunity presented itself theft seems always to have been common.

"What an immoral creature the man who wrote the ten commandments must have been!" said, to me once, an old Border poacher (a descendant of one of the famous old Border reavers). "When you come to think of it, the man that wrote, 'Thou shalt not steal,' must have been a bloody thief." "Property is theft," writes Proudhon. He would evidently have agreed with my old Border friend.

In Sparta, thieving was once permitted. As it was essential that every man should be kept fit for the defence of his country, and, as the accumulation of possessions unfitted him for that, thieving was, therefore, encouraged.

Now whether the accumulation of possessions has a degenerating tendency on humanity or not, there is no doubting that property is the ideal of the moment—but maybe it is only a passing ideal, against which theft is a protest, according to many writers.

But whatever man has been, he has always wished to appear honest. "Honesty is the best policy," that maxim of self-interested morality, has always been accepted as being quite scriptural, so Biblical in fact, that whilst everybody preaches it as being gospel truth, no one believes it to have any commercial value.

It is interesting to note what slight notice is taken of the word *honest* or its relatives *honesty* and *honestly*, in the literature of the world. The word is not to be found in the Old Testament. And it gets very little notice in the New Testament. The word *honest* appears eight times, *honestly* appears three times, and *honesty* but once. In Luke viii. 15, mention is made of an "honest and good heart," and in Acts vi. 3, of "Seven men of honest report," but in Rom. xii. 17, and in 2 Cor. viii. 21, we are urged to "provide things honest in the sight of all men," and there are eight more examples of the practical uses that these words may be put to.

Of the word *thief* and *thieves*, we have twelve references to *thief* in the Old Testament, and ten in the New Testament, three references to *thieves* in the Old Testament and nine references in the New Testament.

People had not as favourable chances of stealing in Bible times, as they have to-day. Possessions, in those days, did not admit of easy theft. And when theft did take place, if the thief was caught this was his charge, "He shall return seven-fold, he shall give all the substance of his house," and if he could not do this he had to be reduced to bondage.

The thief, then, was treated worse than the shareholder of a company before the passing of the "Limited Liability Co's Act." Now, both investors and thieves receive the same treatment.

Carlyle characterized the Act so: "unlimited roguery and limited responsibility." He knew that the bad side of the Act would be so lavishly used by Company Promoters, etc., as to turn our industrial life into a huge gamble. As it has done.

Apart from Shakespeare, the literature of the world treats our word very slightly. The New Testament may be excused. Our word relates to our earthly life. The New Testament is concerned with eternal life; it might, therefore, find little use for it. But the Old Testament was not troubled about eternal life, and its neglect of the word *honest* wants some explaining. Like Shakespeare, the Bible was dealing with this life only. But we have a different tale to unfold about Shakespeare. He makes use of the word *honest* and its relatives four hundred times.

When a very small boy I was asked to observe a fine-looking man approaching. After he had passed out of hearing I was told that he used Shakespeare as his Bible, and even went to the length of writing all his poor children's names in his works; that he was a man nobody could find any fault with; ready always to help anybody,

anytime; so pleasant and so cheerful; and he believed better to his wife and children than anyone in the district; to the disgust of everybody the vicar held him up as "a burning and a shining light to a' the place," but for all this he was "a puir misguided Atheist."

Looking over my own life—dishonesty appalled me at school, and more so at Sunday School. On serving my time to a trade, I was astonished to find that my employer, an old elder, had a different sort of outlook on week-days than he had on Sundays. For six days of the week I was taught to be dishonest. He called it being "canny." Because of his wealth and the position he held he was made a magistrate. Had he needed any moral force of character for his magistracy it would have been found wanting. For fifty-six years of my working-life I have been thrown against several thousands of commercially-honest men, but have not come in contact with an honest man.

"An *honest* man's the beggar's brother," so the Spanish people tell us. And similar truthful proverbs may be culled from all lands. Why should these things be? That there is such a thing as mechanical progress, who can doubt? But what of moral progress?

In William Blake's *Illustrated Catalogue of Pictures* (Published 1809), he thus describes Chaucer's *Canterbury Pilgrims*—"The characters of Chaucer's *Canterbury Pilgrims* are the characters which compose all ages and all nations. . . . We see the same characters repeated again and again, in animals, vegetables, and minerals, and in men. Nothing new occurs in identical existence. . . . As Newton numbered the stars, and as Linnæus numbered the plants, so Chaucer numbered the classes of men."

And, here and now, "That Tocsin of the soul, the dinner bell"—reminds me that I must draw my rambles to a close.

GEORGE WALLACE.

Acid Drops

"Vilify those whom you cannot otherwise induce to attend church-service," is a very well-worn text of the poorly patronized parson. Sneering at folk who prefer the healthy outer air to inferior staleness, the Rev. C. P. Gliddon, of St. Paul's Walthamstow, particularly attacks motorists, whom he thus describes:—

Throughout the week these men struggle and cheat and scurry that they may have enough money to run a car and get out into the country, but when they get there, their souls are so shrunk by the lives they daily lead that they do not know what to do with it. [sic.]

The cleric's every-day existence, on the other hand, is marked by a consequent expansiveness, which leads to generous, truthful, impersonal, generalization.

In *The Lecture Recorder*, King George V.'s descent is traced back to King David, the Man after God's Own Heart, by the well-named, Rev. A. B. Grimaldi. To dig up one's family tree to find King David at the head of it, surely constitutes the Height of Mortification.

The *Methodist Times* boasts that in the Durham County Council a "very large percentage of its members are members or adherents of the Primitive Methodist Church." We should be the last to suggest that this fact has any bearing on the present situation in the "devastated areas" of England. But it is a most unfortunate time to take credit for so deplorable a state of affairs. God at least does not encourage the hope that Primitive Methodist prayers avail with Him when distributing His favours.

A film entitled *San Francisco* is described as "the story of a rough diamond who brags that he is an Atheist." "But," continues the critic quoted, "a good woman comes into his life . . . also, his greatest friend is one who used to play in the gutter with him as a

youth, but later became a priest." Then, the great earthquake "coincides with the conversion of the Atheist, and, as the new man sinks to his knees, the new San Francisco rises from the ruins of the old." ("Came the dawn"). This conversion scene, thinks the critic, "could have been more effective had it not been so melodramatic," but, even so, he was "considerably moved by it." The priest is played by Spencer Tracey, "a Catholic." We know that "Atheist" as well as we know the Catholic: he is peculiarly a Catholic-Atheist, and is shaped in the foundry of "Catholic Truth."

The Bishop of Salisbury is to "re-dedicate" the war memorial in the little Dorset village of West Lulworth. "This step," he explains, "is being taken following the desecration of the memorial last week, when, after a village dance, empty beer bottles were placed on the memorial; one bottle being placed on top of the cross." Perhaps the villagers have been reading G. W. Foote's *Bible and Beer*, and see in their act, a religious significance. In all things we must have charity.

Can there be a more merciless comment on 2,000 years of Christianity than the following, from the Belgrade correspondent of a London daily?—

Following the murder of Joca Uroshevitch, a wealthy merchant and prominent politician, at Arandjelovac, Jugoslavia . . . his family was persuaded by the witchcraft operators for which this district is notorious to take investigations into their own hands. . . . Taking a quantity of Uroshevitch's blood before he was buried, the relatives boiled it with water taken from nine wells in the district and placed it, together with a huge burning candle and image-lamp, on the bed in which Uroshevitch was found dead. . . . The relatives explained that, after feeding on the mixture for nine days, the bad spirit responsible for the murder will force the criminal to confess voluntarily.

In the Kentish Churches prayers are being said in the pulpits for God to stop sending rain as the amount received in Kent has been unhelpful to the hop crops. In South Africa the natives make special pilgrimages to Mt. Lomo, and supplicate for more or less rain as the case may be. In America, the Hopi Indians put up similar petitions to their fetish. In all cases, something happens.

Joseph Symes, at one time Wesleyan Minister, and later a brave and uncompromising Freethought advocate, used to tell, on this point, a good story. When in Australia the country was subjected to a phenomenal drought. Prayers were being mouthed in all the pulpits week after week. In the middle of the dry period he had to undertake a long journey on horseback in the Bush. He came to a large lake, and at that point the first rain experienced for months took place. Symes thought of the distress that had been caused and rejoiced at the rainfall. After an hour or two, the rain ceased and he proceeded on his journey. He had to learn later that this, the first refreshing rain-storm for months, had emptied its entire contents into the lake.

Floods caused by exceptionally heavy rain are submerging whole provinces in Northern India, and the death roll is feared to be enormous. Bengal and Assam are swept by floodwaters from the Brahmaputra and tributary. Large numbers of villages in the Sibsagar district of Assam are entirely submerged, and the loss of life cannot be calculated. Flood waters are twenty feet deep.

From the *New York Times* of July 4:—

Estimates by various authorities have placed crop losses at more than 250,000,000 dollars in the South, and in the Spring wheat states. Whether the rains of this week would reduce the figure remained problematical.

From the same paper, same page:—

Rising river, after a cloud-burst and heavy rains, inundates town of Gonzales in Texas.

From page 349 of *Listen for a Lonesome Drum*, by Carl Carmer, we take the following:—

One dark little cloud was in the blue sky as we approached Dryden, and it suddenly let go with a sharp torrent of rain that ceased in five minutes. We saw a farmer standing, hayrake in hand, beside the road. His wet shirt was sticking to his broad chest, and the hay spread at his feet glistened with raindrops.

"Hard luck," I said.

He looked at us.

"If I was God," he said evenly, "I'd be a God and not a damn fool."

The Methodists have refused to pass any judgment upon "what is the mind of Christ" on the subject of war. It is in any case irrelevant, but one might imagine that Methodists would know what Methodists think on this subject. Like those who consult the stars, instead of thinking, the Methodists have decided to appoint a committee "to examine and report" on what the committee thinks Christ thinks the Methodists should think He thinks.

Anyone who wishes "to petition" "Our Lady" at Lourdes can do so by sending the petition to an ex-soldier pilgrim. "Our Lady" is sure to hear it, though no doubt the ex-soldier would be only too pleased to hand it to her personally. No charge is made either—though whether this is because the Church is not altogether sure that the petition will reach its destination, or because of a generous gesture on the part of the Church, is not quite clear. We are, however, sure there must be a large number of Catholics who will take advantage of this novel post, though it must be a blow to believers in human intelligence that so many can be found.

Of course, Anglo-Catholics can be placed in exactly the same category as their Roman brothers. The *Church Times* has this gem of wisdom in a recent number:—

An ordinary Englishman remains one and the same while attending church to pray, attending a concert to listen, or attending his office to work. It seems no more paradoxical to teach that the one Christ is always "with God" in heaven, and there sustains the existence of the universe, became also incarnate to labour among mankind, and now gives Himself as spiritual meat in the Blessed Sacrament.

Poor Jesus—to be called "Spiritual Meat"! What a lot of swallowing he and his story really takes.

Quite a number of books on God or about God are announced. Their writers evidently feel that the conception of Deity must move with the times or be explained or re-interpreted again. For example, Dr. Hughes' book, *The Christian Idea of God*, "passes in review a number of writers and theologians." Dr. Hughes does not agree with Karl Barth's description of God as "wholly Other." He thinks "far transcending" makes God more clear to the ordinary man. On the other hand Dr. Selbie in his book, *The Fatherhood of God*, "sets out to re-interpret the doctrine of God in a more Christian sense," and insists that "we must construct our conception of God on Christ, not try to interpret Christ's nature according to a pre-conceived conception of God." This must be rather difficult for the true Christian who believes *Christ is God*, or *God is Christ*, or both together, with a Holy Ghost thrown in. A reviewer thinks Dr. Selbie shows "a certain lack of appreciation of the indwelling of Christ in His mystical Body the Church." We heartily agree.

Humorous examples of Christian "history" can often be found in the leading articles of our religious journals. Talking about liberty one pious writer says "there was more liberty under Queen Anne than under Marcus Aurelius. . . . But in the Roman Empire the age of the decline began when Marcus Aurelius was succeeded by Commodus, and, in the end, the world collapsed in stagnation and barbarism, from which it needed a thousand

years of Christianity to rescue it." The truth is, of course, that the triumph of Christianity, bringing with it the filth, the cruelty, the stupidity, the ignorance, and credulity which have ever distinguished that religion, brought about the "Dark Ages" which hung like a black cloud over Europe, and only commenced to disappear with the Renaissance. It was the Humanists, the Deists and the Freethinkers, who, by attacking Christianity, succeeded in some measure to light the torch of liberty in Europe. And against "dictatorships," even the Christian one, we hope all Freethinkers and lovers of liberty will continue to fight.

Five shillings can be spent quite remuneratively, if one can believe the published testimonials. With your postal-order, fill in a form addressed to "O My Dear Jesus," and forward it to a Romanist Society in Brisbane, where the written request will be placed under a Votive Lamp and bespattered with Abracadabra. The Catholic monthly *Filipinas*, bearing the imprimatur of James Duhig, Archbishop of Brisbane, gives space to the results:—

St. Jude is just wonderful. I am a widow and I leave all the managing of the farm to St. Jude. Since first reading in *Filipinas*, the wonders of St. Jude, I decided to have him for my guide and help in everything. I buried his medal in one of the paddocks, and have had wonderful returns since; I got five bags to the acre of wheat, whereas my neighbours only got three.

Enclosed please find an offering for a Votive Lamp to burn before the Most Holy Eucharist in thanksgiving to the Sacred Heart, the Little Flower, St. Jude, St. Rita, St. Anthony, and Ven. Mother Duchesne. My mother has had a very sore hand for a long time—some months ago she had radium treatment for it, and suffered great pain in the arm up to the shoulder. She was also very weak and sick. We were all making Novenas, but there was no improvement, so I wrote to the good nuns and obtained a wee portion of earth from the Little Flower's grave. I sent it to mother, asking her to swallow a little of it and put the remainder of it on her arm. She did as I asked her, and in a short time the pain had left the arm altogether.

Another Australian publication bears the imprimatur of the Archbishop of Melbourne, Dr. Mannix. It is called *The Monstrous*, no, pardon us, *The Monstrance*. This, too, is intent on showing how well religion pays:—

I wish to bring under the notice of the Community a remarkable answer to our prayer through the intercession of Blessed Peter Julian Eynard. A few weeks ago a valuable Jersey cow belonging to us became very ill, and in a few days was dying. My husband and another man decided it should be destroyed to put it out of pain. I proposed that we make a Novena to Blessed Eynard, but they said she would be dead before the Novena was finished. However we commenced the Novena at once, and before two days the cow had wonderfully improved, could stand up and eat, and is now completely cured, and as good as ever and is walking again. . . . I must also add that we rubbed some of the oil on her head. I can see her now, as I look out the window, grazing contentedly in the paddock.

Whatever the price put upon this Holy Oil, it appears to be worth it. Almost are we persuaded to become a Christian.

John Bull exposes somebody for passing himself off as a "Ps.D." We express no opinion at all as to how guilty a man must be to call himself by such a title, which seems to have reference to what is apparently called "Psychology." This word is used by so many people, and to describe so many queer things, that we advise all who are tempted to use titles of the kind to confine themselves to "D.D." We all know where we are when people put on airs about "Divinity"—they are quacks, there is no divinity. But there is a genuine science of psychology, and we object to the constant misuse of this name.

Bishop Barnes (D.D.), is said to be a Modernist. He is at present patronizing the Oxford Group Movement to which he gave public "benediction" recently on the Wireless. This Group are as fundamentalist as any bunch of Kansas Hilly Billies, but they have rivalled the Rev. William Sunday and Moody and Sankey in gathering into their mission a large number of disgruntled Christians. It is easy enough to tire Christians of commonplace services. They rush after the series of sensationalists whose name is legion. We long ago ceased to hope that "Modernist Churchmen," would rise superior to temptations which overwhelm the uneducated mob of believers.

The new boss at the City Temple has a literary style all his own. He recommends the "Oxford Group," but his recommendation is hardly happily phrased. He says:—

There is definitely a real evangelical fervour in the Oxford Group, and my advice to those whose Christianity is mostly conventional and largely a sham, would be by all means go to it.

At any rate Mr. Leslie Weatherhead is doing his best to secure the Group a very large audience of Christians.

These "Group" meetings must be exceedingly funny to anyone gifted with an ordinary sense of humour. Mr. Weatherhead recommends everybody "except introverts" to attend their meetings. We wonder if our bishops are "introverts." At a recent meeting it appears that Mr. Weatherhead "chuckled with holy glee to think that bishops and archbishops might go . . . and some youngster of sixteen would drift up to an archbishop, and ask him if he were troubled with impure thoughts." For some occult reason Mr. Weatherhead says that this sort of experience "might be very depressing."

Centuries ago the Church found that Miracles did very little good and a great deal of harm, because while some enjoyed miraculous benefits, there were so many more people who lost faith because the miracles they prayed for did not happen. A speaker at a recent Methodist Conference warned the delegates that "He found people who prayed for their sick, and because their prayers seemed not to be answered they lost their faith altogether." Obviously if you gain converts by performing miracles, you will lose adherents when your magic fails. Why should God favour one Christian with long life, and kill off another the moment he is "saved."

The "Freethinker" Circulation Drive

It is proposed to celebrate the coming-of-age of the present editorship by an attempt to create a substantial increase in the circulation of this paper. The plan suggested is:—

(1) Each interested reader is to take an extra copy for a period of twelve months, and to use this copy as a means of interesting a non-subscriber to the point of taking the *Freethinker* regularly.

(2) So soon as this new subscriber is secured, the extra copy may be dropped by the present subscriber. Until this is accomplished, he will regard the extra threepence weekly (for one year) as a fine for his want of success.

The plan is simple, and it is not costly; but it does mean a little work, and whether or not it is more blessed to give than to receive, it is certainly easier for most to give than it is to work. But in this case it is the work alone that will yield permanent benefit. There are many thousands of potential readers in the country; why not try and secure some of them?

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2,412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- D. SLAVIN.—Your suggestion is a very good one, and we should be pleased to do as you suggest. But we could not consider appealing for funds for the purpose. If our readers will join heartily in the "circulation drive," and work for it, we could then most probably do as you desire.
- H. W. KEAN.—(1) Impossible adequately to answer your questions in a few lines. Spinoza used the word "God," but he meant by "God" something without will, or aim, or personality, and in the whole of his philosophy it was a term that stood only for an impersonal "Nature." But one must read Spinoza with reference to the terminology in use. (2) Spencer spoke of the "absolute" in the passage named as though it were something positive. But, as a more critical reading of him would show, it was mere negation. And you cannot really think of anything that does not give the material for thinking. It is equal to saying that when one denies the existence of a square circle, one is affirming its possibility.
- F. R. CARLTON.—We are rather surprised to hear that "a number of members of the N.S.S." are annoyed with what we say about Fascism, and, quite plainly we question their existence. We cannot understand how anyone calling himself a Freethinker can have any sympathy whatever with a system that denies freedom of thought and speech. His place is certainly outside the N.S.S. Some years ago the experiment was tried of giving a page of the *Freethinker* to an exposition of any subject on which a competent writer cared to express himself, but it was dropped because so few availed themselves of the opportunity. We should be quite willing to repeat the experiment, if the representatives of different shades of opinion cared to avail themselves of it. In that case Fascism would stand the same chance as any other opinion.
- R.P.—Thanks for your interesting and amusing letter. In the army or navy you can insist upon being described as belonging to whatever religion or non-religion you please. But you can, we believe, only be excused by your officer from attending religious service. We believe that men are not punished for refusing to attend a religious service, but for not obeying orders. If only those went to the Church service who wished to do so, there would be very few there. Hence the practical compulsion.
- B. HERTSFORD.—Thanks for good wishes. We are taking all the rest we can, but we should not take kindly to sitting still. In any case it is not work so much as worry that tells against one. The actual gift of the £100 to the Theosophical Society seems to cast some doubt on the truth of the story.
- "CINE CERE."—The Bishop of Bradford's wonder that so many people can get on without religion means getting on without *his* religion, and that wonder is not too distantly related to the fear that people may get on without *him*.
- I. L. ABRAHAM.—Received and shall appear as early as possible. No one with any pretence to genuine scientific thinking believes to-day that nations rise and fall because of their "racial stock." That sort of thing is scientifically dead.
- "GREENBANK" (Bristol).—Sorry, but we cannot tell from whom you received a copy of the paper. It did not come from us, as you are a regular subscriber.
- H. HOLT.—We are obliged for the two new subscriptions. That is giving us twice as much as we asked for, but it is none the less welcome.
- J. CLOSE.—Thanks, we can use the citations nearer the time—along with other things. We have several things in mind for the occasion. We are taking every possible care, but the work must go on, and we are feeling much better.
- For Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—Dr. Readnell, 28. 6d.
- We have to thank several readers for sending us the source of the quotation, in last week's paper. It is from Brownings' *The Confessional*.
- 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.

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

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

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.

All cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."

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

Sugar Plums

A correspondent, to whom we refer elsewhere in this issue, charges us with being "heavily biassed against Fascism." Of course we have a "bias" against Fascism, as we have a bias for or against many other things. To have a bias means of necessity no more than to lean in one direction rather than in another, and how can anyone with the slightest claim to intelligence study anything without bias towards or against it? Probably the writer means we have a *prejudice* against it, and that is a very different thing, for that means expressing a judgment without due examination, and to this we plead "not guilty." We have examined Fascism in both theory and practice. A Fascist, who is forbidden to listen to the other side, and where Fascism is in power, is punished if he does, strikes us as the last word in human degradation. And we continue to be "heavily biassed" against such a system—if "system" is not too dignified a name for it.

The *Manchester Guardian* is one of the minority of newspapers in the country which writes with a sense of responsibility towards the public, and one may assume that they have taken to verify, so far as it is possible, a narrative told by a woman who was for two years a prisoner under the Fascist Government of Germany. The article appeared in the issue of the *Guardian* for August 7, and we advise those interested to get a copy of the paper and see what Fascism really means when it gets to work. Nothing more villainous has appeared for some time, and it enables the English reader to realize some of the things that are occurring under a system which is being lauded by two or three of our "large circulation" papers, and the kind of thing that is under Fascism.

The story told is a ghastly one, and we can only give the barest outline here. The woman's home was visited in the early hours of the morning by three Blackshirts. The wife and her husband were taken off to the Black-shirt guardroom. After the first question was asked, "Are you a Communist?" the woman was seized, her back was bared and she was ordered twenty-five strokes. At the sixth she fainted. She was then made to stand up, and with the skin on her back broken was forced to sit on a chair. Another man was brought, a former town councillor, who had already been beaten and was unable to stand. "His eyes were turned up so that one could scarcely see anything but the whites. The saliva was running from his mouth." "Frau X" was then brought in and beaten with rubber truncheons. "I was put across the chair once more, laid bare and given further strokes. My mouth was stopped with a cloth, my legs stretched and parted. My husband was brought in, in order to witness the treatment given to me. Later I was forced to look at his maltreatment. . . . We women

were not only maltreated, but coarsely abused, and each of us was branded on the forehead." Four of the prisoners were placed in a small cell, and two had to sleep on the floor. The lady, she signs herself, L.U., was then taken to another prison, and beaten again. The letter is filled with similar details of almost unbelievable brutalities inflicted on both L.U. and others. L.U. affirms that eighty per cent of the women were working women and twenty per cent intellectuals. Their crime was they were suspected of being in touch with anti-Fascists. For an unimpassioned statement of cold-blooded brutality, the account equals anything we have ever read. We should like to see the whole letter reprinted and circulated by the million copies.

The other day we saw an account of a meeting of ex-service men, who entertained a company of German ex-service men, and at the conclusion drank to the health of Hitler, and sang the Hore Wiessel song. We would like to present each of the Englishmen present with a copy of the *Guardian* for August 7.

Mr. Whitehead reports that the week in Bath could certainly be called successful, because many of the inhabitants learned there was another side of religion, hitherto unknown to them. We thank the local member of the N.S.S. who made the visit possible, and perhaps a return visit might be arranged a little later. Mr. Whitehead now returns to Lancashire, and commencing to-day (August 16) will spend a week in Burnley, where friends will be numerous and good meetings may be expected. Full details will be found in the Lecture Notices column, and the local Branch of the N.S.S. will co-operate at all meetings.

Epistolary Pearls From The Archives of Edessa

(Continued from page 507)

Other churches were built round about the city; and many people came from the East and from Assyria to see the miracles of Addæus, and to hear his words. Narses, the Assyrian King, hearing of the wonders performed by Addæus, asked Abgar either to send the man himself, or to give him a full report of the man's doings in Edessa. This last request Abgar granted, sending Narses an account which filled him with amazement. Abgar, being unable to cross the Roman territory into Palestine with the object of slaying the Jews for their having crucified Christ, wrote as follows to the Emperor Tiberius:—

King Abgar to our Lord Tiberius Cæsar: knowing that nothing is concealed from your Majesty, I write and inform your great and dread Sovereignty that the Jews who are under your hand, and dwell in the country of Palestine, have assembled themselves together, and crucified the Christ, without any fault worthy of death, after he had done before them signs and wonders, and had shown them great and mighty works, so that he even raised the dead to life for them; and at the time they crucified him the sun became darkened, and the earth also shook, and all creatures trembled and quaked, and, as if of their own accord, at this deed the whole creation quailed, and the inhabitants of the creation. And now your Majesty knoweth what order it is meet for you to give respecting the people of the Jews who have done these things.⁷

⁷ Cureton, p. 16. Moses Chorenensis, a writer of the fifth century, who is termed "the father of Armenian history," gives in his *Historia Armenica* (I. II., c. 33) a copy of the above letter in slightly different phrases, and with the following important addition after the marvels attending the Crucifixion: "Jesus himself, three days later resuscitated from among the dead and appeared to many. To-day in all places his mere name invoked by his disciples produces the greatest

This remarkable epistle drew from Tiberius the following reply:—

The letter of thy Fidelity towards me I have received, and it has been read before me. Touching what the Jews have had the audacity to do with the cross, the Governor Pilate also has written and made known to my Proconsul, Aulbinus, respecting the same things which thou hast written to me. But because the war of the people of Spain, who have rebelled against me, is on foot at this time, for this reason I have not been able to avenge the matter; but I am prepared, when I have leisure, to bring a charge legally against the Jews, who act not according to the law. And on this account Pilate also, who was appointed by me governor there, I have sent another in his stead, and dismissed him in disgrace, because he exceeded the law, and did the will of the Jews, and for the gratification of the Jews, crucified Christ who, according to what I hear about him, instead of the cross of death, deserved to be honoured and adored by them, and the more so, because they saw with their own eyes everything that he did. But thou according to thy Fidelity towards me, and thine own compact, and that of thy fathers, hast done well in thus writing to me.⁸

Abgar received Aristides, the ambassador of Tiberius, and sent him back with presents suitable for his august master. Aristides "went from Edessa to Thicuntha, where Claudius, second from the Emperor was," and next to Artica, where Tiberius was, Caius then watching the surrounding regions. Aristides told Tiberius all about Abgar and Addæus, and when Tiberius "had leisure from the war," he sent ordering some of the chief Jews in Palestine to be slain, at which Abgar greatly rejoiced. In his last illness Addæus, calling Aggæus before the whole Church, appointed him "Guide and Ruler" in his stead. Palut, a deacon, he made a Presbyter; and Abshalma, a scribe, he made a deacon. Then in the presence of the Nobles and Chiefs, Addæus gave a lengthy address, at the end of which Abgar with his Princes and Nobles returned in grief to his palace; and, knowing that Addæus was near death, he sent him "honourable and noble apparel" for the interment of his corpse; but Addæus refused the gift, saying that he had taken nothing from him in life, and would take nothing from him at death, because Christ had said, "Accept not anything from any man, and possess not anything in the world." Three days later on "the fifth of the week, and the fourteenth of the month, Iyar, "he died mourned by all the city, Christians, Jews, and Pagans." "Abgar the King" laid him in his own ancestral tomb. There the Church prayed at intervals, and commemorated his death "from year to year."

REMARKS

THE EUSEBIAN ACCOUNT

This refers both the correspondence between Abgar and Christ, and the preaching of Thaddæus in Edessa to the year 340, which indubitably means the three hundred and fortieth year of the Greek reckoning, and which therefore equates with the twenty-

miracles." In this exemplar the alleged author styles himself "Abgar King of Armenia"! A Latin version of the aforesaid history with notes, dissertations, and other matters, was issued by the Whiston Brothers at London in 1736. Cureton (pp. 125-139) gives B. II., cc. 26-36, from the French version, issued at Paris by M. le Vaillant de Florival with a dedication to Nicholas Emperor of Russia [from 1825 to 1855.]

⁸ Cureton, p. 17. This letter, as presented by Moses of Chorene adds that Tiberius in consequence of Pilate's report about Christ's case vainly requested the Roman Senate to reckon Christ among the Roman deities; and that Tiberius threatened with death all who should speak ill of the Christians. Tiberius calls Abgar "King of the Armenians." Cureton, p. 134.

ninth year of our era, when according to several of the fathers, the crucifixion took place.⁹ As Christ died just before Easter, the letters are evidently referred to the first quarter of the year named; and as his disciples were all at Jerusalem on the Pentecost following his ascension,¹⁰ the departure of Thaddæus for Edessa is no less plainly assigned to the same year. Soon after inserting the above account, Eusebius inserts a brief reference to its contents. This last occurs between his relation of Stephen's death and his report of Paul's conversion; and therein he adds that Thaddæus converted all Edessa, and that ever since then the city has remained faithful.¹¹ Yet almost immediately hereupon he recounts Philip's conversion of an Ethiopian, and proclaims this man as the first heathen to be converted.¹² But, according to *Acts*, Philip's Ethiopian professed the Jewish Faith, had been to Jerusalem for the purpose of worship, and was reading the prophet Isaiah on his homeward journey at the moment when Philip brought to him the light of the Gospel.¹³ In the Eusebian account the visit of Thaddæus to Edessa is represented as the natural fulfilment of Christ's promise, and no special circumstances are said to have determined the time of its occurrence; but, nevertheless, Eusebius himself seems to have connected it with the flight of Christians from Jerusalem upon Stephen's martyrdom. *Acts*, which records this flight, says that the apostles did not take part in it.¹⁴

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

(To be continued)

⁹ See *Martyrs of Edessa*.

¹⁰ *Acts of the Apostles* i. 12-15, ii. 8.

¹¹ H.E. ii. 1.

¹² H.E. ii. 1. ¹³ *Acts* viii. 27-39. ¹⁴ *Acts* viii. 1.

Greta Garbo and Francisco Ferrer

BEFORE the Prague Congress of Freethinkers passes into history, a final chapter remains to be written. Mr. C. Bradlaugh Bonner and myself have described in these pages something of the *personnel* of the Congress, of the papers read, of the resolutions adopted. The closing scene of this important Conference did not take place in Prague at all, yet it was in many ways the most significant and inspiring of the activities of the Congress. As the only English delegate privileged to take part in this closing scene, it falls to me to round off the series of articles on this memorable Congress.

This most successful close took the form of the unveiling of a monument to Francisco Ferrer in the principal square of the great city of Ostrava, in Moravia. All Freethinkers know, of course, of Ferrer, the Spanish "martyr of Montjuich," and founder of the "Free Schools" movement in his country. But others than Freethinkers read the *Freethinker*, so a few words about Ferrer will not be out-of-place here—especially in view of what is happening in Spain at the moment. Briefly, then, Francisco Ferrer was born at Alella, near Barcelona, the most progressive city in Spain. He was a Freethinker, with unorthodox political views, whose rather stormy youth had made residence abroad for a while desirable. But his chief offence in the eyes of the clerical reactionaries who under Alfonso XIII. misgoverned Spain was his founding, in the opening years of this century, of the *Escuela Moderna*, the modern, or free, school, in which the instruction given ignored Catholic dogma. For this gravest of all offences in the view of the Church Ferrer was arrested on some pretext or other, and after a farce of a trial by court-martial was shot by a firing-squad in the fortress of Montjuich just out-

side Barcelona. That day, October 13, 1909, was destined to be an unlucky day for the Church in Spain. When we read of the churches and convents now going up in fire and smoke in the land that Ferrer loved and tried to help, let us, before we condemn, remember the gentle, soft-spoken school-master done to death in the moat of Montjuich. Those who would know more of this infamous page in Spanish history, a page that sheds so much light on the history of present-day Spain, should read William Archer's *Life, Trial, and Death of Francisco Ferrer*.

The monument to be unveiled at Ostrava was only the second one in the world to commemorate the great Spanish reformer. It was erected by the Union of Socialist Freethinkers of Moravia-Silesia. Ostrava is a long way from Prague, being almost on the frontier of Poland, near Teshin, of whose location Mr. Lloyd-George confessed ignorance on an historic occasion. It is a great industrial city of steel-works and coalmines. Of almost mushroom growth, the city had 42,000 inhabitants in 1921, while at the present-day it has over 175,000 inhabitants and is the third largest city of Czechoslovakia. The town-council, with, apparently, a majority of Socialist and Communist members, is presided over by the Mayor, Josef Chalupnik, a Freethought comrade who is also a member of the Senate of Czechoslovakia.

All the delegates to the Prague Congress were invited to take part in the unveiling of the Ferrer monument. Not all were able to do so, for the distance (and expense) was considerable, involving as it did a journey of over six hours all across Bohemia and Moravia. As I have indicated, I was the only English delegate able to make this journey. It is tempting to dwell upon the sights seen from the train as we cross the smiling plains of Bohemia and Moravia, but we must leave the ploughing oxen and gaily-dressed peasants for the slag-heaps and chimneys of modern industrialism. Our train was met at the station by the Mayor, and about two thousand others, and we were welcomed by an address. After this we drove in a cavalcade of about a dozen cars, with the Mayor at our head, to the magnificent town hall. The streets were lined with people, as they would be for a royal procession in less enlightened countries, and it was amusing, to one westerner at least, to be greeted by the official salute of the police and the clenched raised fists of the uniformed Communists who cooperated in keeping back the crowd.

Space will not permit the telling of the official reception at the town hall, nor of the lantern lecture on Ferrer given in the evening, in the fine hall attached to the permanent anti-clerical exhibition maintained by Ostrava Freethinkers. We must struggle through the dense crowd packed in the wide square in which stands the monument which will be a perpetual reminder to the passer-by of the ferocity of the wolf-like followers of the Lamb.

What a manifestation! Picture to yourself a square about the size of Trafalgar Square, London, packed so that it was impossible to walk about in it. At the very lowest estimate there must have been 10,000 people present. Near one side was a small platform, and beside it the monument. This was a bust in bronze under a stone canopy supported by pillars. I am not an authority on the plastic arts, but I should say that the bust was good in its "photographic" art line; a simple and straightforward representation of a simple and straightforward man.

Proceedings opened by a band playing the Czechoslovak National Anthem, stirring, but lengthy. I was informed that when the hymn was adopted at the foundation of the Republic, neither the Czechs nor the Slovaks would yield up their local hymn, so both

were strung together. Be that as it may, the proceedings terminated with the singing by all present, led by a choir, of the "International." So there was something for all tastes. And as the square had been fitted in every part with loud-speakers, all present were able to hear the orators.

I am not an orator, but being the only Englishman present, I was called upon to speak. More than ever I regretted the absence of our President, Mr. Chapman Cohen. But being pressed by the President of the International and by the President of the Czechoslovak Freethinkers, I decided to "say my piece." I had the very great honour of being called upon of all the delegates to speak first, after the Mayor and the President of the Freethought International, and I was followed by French, American (Czech), Russian and other speakers. My speech was the only one in English, and it was translated into Czech by no less a person than Mr. Emil Voska, President of the Czechoslovak Freethinkers, and, incidentally, one of the half-dozen men who helped Masaryk to found the Republic.

The following is the gist of what the English delegate said. He began by making the usual avowal, that it was a privilege and honour to address such a gathering on such an occasion, but added that it was a still greater honour to be the only one there to speak for England. The English people had played a great part in the struggle for freedom, for tolerance, and for freedom of thought and speech, and it was therefore right and natural that they should be represented there. At the moment there was a great struggle going on for the soul of the English people. That people was unfortunately confused and divided at the moment, some leaning to France and Russia, some to Germany. He, the speaker, was not going to talk politics, but of one thing he was sure, that was that all Englishmen were the friends of the small nations [alas! this was before the let-down over Abyssinia], and especially of that nation whose honoured son, Masaryk, had dwelt so long among us.

"This solemn, but joyful, occasion," went on the speaker, "reminds me of a great film, indeed a noble film, in which a great actress of a little nation, like Czechoslovakia, played the chief rôle. I expect that some of you will have seen this film, *Queen Christina*, in which the incomparable Greta Garbo plays the part of the Swedish Queen of the middle of the seventeenth century. In the film story the queen receives the ambassadors of the great States, England, France and Spain. To the Spanish Ambassador the Queen speaks of the leading men in Spanish arts and sciences of that time—of Cervantes, of Lope de Vega, of Velasquez. The ambassador expresses his surprise and gratification that the Queen of so distant a land should know of, and care for, these great men of another country. The Queen replied in these gracious words: 'In honouring your great men we elevate ourselves.'"

"What was true then," continued the speaker, "is true to-day. To-day another small nation is erecting this monument to another great man—a very great man—of Spain. By so doing, by honouring the name of Francisco Ferrer and his work for education and Freethought, my Czechoslovak comrades are elevating themselves. I, an Englishman, can only be jealous that my country, when, in its turn, it raises a monument to Ferrer, will only be following the noble Czechoslovak people."

BAYARD SIMMONS.

From the Turk and the comet, Good Lord, deliver us.
Addition to the Litany by Pope Calixtus III.

The Curse of Blind Belief

WHAT are the implications involved in the doctrine of an almighty, omniscient, and prescient being such as religions teach and the credulous public blindly accept?

Properly to answer this question it is necessary to lay down certain fundamental propositions.

(1) All belief rests fundamentally upon thought, and belief in turn must, or should, be in accord with logical canons of thinking. Again, the nature of thought must be understood, otherwise it would be impossible to distinguish between correct and faulty thinking.

(2) The basis of thought is human experience, together with the logical deductions drawn therefrom. The sole material for thought is the external world, the non-ego, the contents or nature of which is absolutely inexplicable to man, but which consists for man in his interpretation of phenomena. This, again, is the reflex of phenomena upon his mind, that is upon his sensations, feeling and will. Man thus receives impressions from the external world, itself inscrutable to him, and interprets this world by reading into it its effects upon his mind.

(3) Nature, as known to us, is a purely subjective creation of man; its existence is assumed for the reason that there must be something beyond man which serves as the cause of his mental states, and it is to this unknown something that is given the name of the external world, or non-ego.

Let us illustrate this by simple example. Before us is a leaf, which I describe as green. But can a leaf possibly be green, and what does such a term really imply? Is it aught else but a sensation that is felt by us through the medium of the optic nerve? But if "green" is truly but a sensation of ours, how can anything not possessed of a nervous structure be "green"? It is not the leaf itself that is green, it is we who attribute the quality of greenness to an external object affecting us in that particular manner. And as we know nothing whatever of this external world but its action upon us, our description of it must of necessity be in terms of our own feelings or sensations.

We may, of course, disregard the fact that the perception of colour may vary—that what is green to one human may be a different colour to another. If we were to accept both these presumptions as true of the external object, it would mean that the same object could be two colours at once.

Like considerations hold true of all properties, and consequently of all bodies described by man. The word "square" for instance, really represents nothing but a complex of tactual sensations arising from passing the hands in definite directions along the outline of a body in such a manner as to remain in contact with it. The term "hard" has no other meaning than that of resistance to pressure applied through muscular exertion. What "hard" is apart from our sensations must remain a mystery to us. For us it is enough that all the external conditions remain constant in their effects upon us.

Since then all matter for thought is due to man's sensations, and to his interpretation of these in accordance with experience, direct or indirect, and since the indispensable prerequisite for all sensation is a nervous system; what possible meaning can attach to the phrase "bodiless spirit"? Is it not in direct contradiction to all experience, to all science and to all philosophy?

Nothing could be more senseless or more dishonest than the idea of an incorporeal life. In discussing this

question, as is also true of all other questions relating to the unknown, one condition is indispensable, namely, that our thinking shall be honest, that is to say that our conclusions shall not exceed or be contradicted by experience.

The terms "soul" and "spirit" in their doctrinal meaning are mere words. As every student of psychology knows, there is no such thing as either, distinct from our mentality as a whole. Like the notion of a God, such terms are in their doctrinal significance but evidence of the power of fear and ignorance which has been handed down from the times of primitive man who, unable to explain natural phenomena, attributed all that happened to supernatural action.

The real truth is, not that God created man, but that man created God.

Again, as to the fact of morality. The central condition of associated existence is the recognition of the fact that where more than one human being is concerned, some standard of action is necessary if the group is to exist. Moral rules arise out of moral feelings, and these again out of the play of sensations by which we are brought into actual relations with what we call the external world. To act rightly, or morally, the impulse must come from within, and not in obedience to a mere command from without, and morality assumes its higher forms when conduct is consciously the product of a perception of the conditions under which general happiness becomes possible. Moral law, in short, is a statement of the conditions that make the life of a community possible.

Naturally there is in associated life the possibility of man acting immorally. This presents a problem for priests only, not for others. For if there is a God, and if moral laws are of divine origin, how could his influence be resisted? If it were God's will that we should act morally under all circumstances, how could we act otherwise?

We do so, replies the priest, because we have free-will. But is this true? Is there in reality any such thing as free-will? There is not. Our will appears to us to be free because we are not always capable of so analysing our mental states as to determine clearly the origin of our motives. But it is certain that nothing happens without a cause; and if that be so then every state of mind is dependent upon definite elements that have given rise to it. But to preach absolute free-will is to declare that a result may exist without a cause, which is as great a logical lie as that other asseveration of divine truth—that the world came from nothing. Has anything ever been created in this way in human experience? Does nature ever create, or does she not always modify, dissolve and reassemble in a different form that which has already existed?

Consider the nature of the Morality offered us by the priesthood. Priestly morality is preached as purely mercenary, and appeals to the lowest of motives, self-interest alone; whereas in proportion to the degree of self-interest involved, action loses its truly moral character. Our moral feeling, our sense of what is right is, like consciousness itself, the mingled result of empirical life, inheritance, training and thought. If conscientiousness were instilled into us by a God, how is it that it has varied from time to time as the intelligence of man has varied? Nay, morality differs, changes during the history of the same people, in various strata of that people, and in different nations.

The harmful influence of religious doctrines on the moral sense is seen if we think of the implications of the teaching that God stands to man as a loving father. God is good! What is the meaning of these terms? If a father were to subject his children to all

the torments of this mundane life, destroy them by thousands by means of earthquakes, floods, typhoons, to arrange that his children should be born to hunger, poverty, and crime, blind, deaf, dumb or maimed, to be the victims of disease and of all the forms of human misery; would it be honest thinking to call such a being a loving father, and the almighty?

What reason can there be for such repulsive hypocrisy? None but that corruption of the mind that results from blind belief rendering it impervious to all honest thinking.

What is the rejoinder the priests make to this criticism? That it ill becomes man to criticize God, he is so immeasurably above human comprehension, and we cannot but submit to his will. But if we cannot form an adequate idea of this being; by what right is he declared to be the acme of goodness and justice? When one counts all the evils to which the human race has been subjected, is it more reasonable to posit a God or a Devil? Would not uprightness of character and respect for truth not rather demand a declaration of what is really the case, namely, that there never has been any evidence regarding the existence or the nature of this God, whilst, on the contrary, reason and experience assure us that no supposition can be less tenable than that of a supreme and eternal being apart from nature itself.

Yet priestcraft declares that this God has ever existed. But if something can exist that has not been created, what reasonable argument can be deduced against a like assumption with regard to the external world? And if there would have been no world had its god not created one; does not the same reasoning apply to God himself? Whatever things we think about we can only imagine them as proceeding from pre-existent forms.

If the common parent of the Jewish, Mohammedan, Egyptian, Babylonian, Christian or any other religion is not mere legendary fear; how does it happen that in their main outlines their gods are alike? Christianity has its prototype and counterpart in the Babylonian mysteries and in those of China, India, Greece and Rome. We have the doctrines of a Virgin Mother, a Trinity, a suffering Saviour. In these legends we find the Son suffering a violent death for the satisfaction of God and to redeem mankind. The absolute identity of the Babylonian and of the Papistic doctrines is incontestably demonstrated by the Rev. Alexander Bishop in his work *The Two Babylons*, published as far back as 1873. Yet so great is the power of unthinking religious belief that even the author himself fails to recognize that this identity is true of Protestantism which he is here fighting for as against Catholicism.

W. MAURICE.

Correspondence

DEATH

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—To say that *pain is not felt at the moment of death* is as irrelevant as to say it is not felt a minute later. Perhaps not, but if the approaches which are part of the process are painful, that is quite enough to make rational a fear of the process.

You may reply that death may be sudden. I hope mine may be. Despite the Church's prayer against sudden death, I fear that less than the other kind. But I do fear it. I am 70, and expect that in a year or two my cells will revolt and turn me out. When turned out, I may be better off than now, or worse. Probably the former, for my present life is mostly pains with hardly any pleasure. *None the less I fear death. This is*

quite unreasonable. Reason would lead me to turn the gas on to-night. Instinct makes me fear to. Similarly reason bids me leave off eating and drinking. I do not enjoy it, and gain nothing by it except a longer stay in a world where I am a complete failure, but Instinct makes me eat and drink.

The *parallel with sleep* is unconvincing. Some do fear sleep. I do. I lie down and intend to sleep, but often at the very moment when my day-consciousness is about to slip away, the instinct of self-preservation awakes, and I start back terrified and awake. Yet my reason and experience say, not only that I will probably wake next morning, but that a moment after my day-life vanishes, my dream-life will come, and stay till the day-life comes back. So far as I can tell, I have never been unconscious at all. Once under an anæsthetic I made a journey 11 months long!

If then my reason is not strong enough to conquer the fear of sleep, is it likely to conquer the fear of death? Death in my opinion (though not in yours) is a similar slipping from one consciousness to another.

As you say, "for primitive man to think of himself as non-existent is an impossibility. I am a primitive man, and find it impossible. But of course I do not agree with your implied sequel, that primitive man is wrong. Progress is sometimes backwards, and the progress from primitivism to science is the growth of a gigantic fallacy. Being primitive, I base my theories on observation, not on scientific principles. I observe my own memory stream. I look back along it. I see no trace of non-existence. The vista fades into haze, it does not end at a precipice. I am told I was born. Quite likely (though it is a mere tradition, little better than the Gospels). But if I am to believe in a non-existence of which I have no evidence, why am I to suppose it to end at birth? My first definite memory is over four years later, a vague memory of existence goes back for centuries earlier. If the latter is a delusion, why not the former? I cannot remember where I was in 500 B.C., but to assume that therefore I was nowhere seems to me a non-sequitur.

"No cause for fear, given understanding."

"Understanding" = agreement with C. Cohen! Anyone who does not agree, evidently does not understand.

And "no cause for fear" does *not* = "no fear." Fear is a fine example of indeterminism, it needs no cause!

C.H.

CALVIN AND DIVORCE

SIR,—In your issue of August 9 you say, "We think the greater freedom of Scotch law with regard to marriage, is that it has kept more closely to the Roman Laws of Marriage."

That is undoubtedly true with regard to some aspects of the marriage law, but it does not adequately explain the superiority of the Scotch Divorce Law to that of England.

Before 1560 Scotland was a Catholic country, and like all other Catholic countries it had no divorce law. There, however, as in all other Catholic countries, the Pope had the power to "annul" a marriage if he thought fit to do so. At the present day the Pope will "annul" a marriage on fifteen different grounds, and it was much the same at that date. This power, of course, has been rarely exercised except for the benefit of kings, princes, and other influential people.

In 1560 the Reformers triumphed in Scotland, and their triumph put an end to the "annulling" power of the Pope. To replace that power they enacted a divorce law which is substantially the one in force to-day. They did the same in various Continental countries.

England never became a genuinely Protestant country, and fell between two stools. She lost the annulling power of the Pope, and was too superstitious to enact a divorce law of her own. She went without any law at all till 1857, and then she enacted as bad a one as possible.

R. B. KERR.

[We think the first two paragraphs in the above letter bear out what we said. The Roman idea of marriage as a civil contract, must have influenced the question of divorce.—Ed.]

IN MEMORIAM

On Active Service

SIMMONS.—In affectionate remembrance of my youngest brother, and fellow poet, ERIC WARR SIMMONS ("JACK"), B.Sc., 2nd Lieut., 6th Batt., York and Lancaster Reg., reported "Missing," Suvla Bay, Gallipoli, August 11, 1915.

GLORY, that false half-brother of King Death,
Came with a laurel wreath,
But took his breath.

Glory, that empty substitute for Life,
Breeder of hate and strife,
Concealed a knife.

Dressed up as Duty, Glory him deceived;
The blood-soaked earth received
The life bereaved.

He fled from Life in idiot pursuit
Of dusty, Dead Sea fruit:
Now he lies mute.

In the bright day great deeds he might have done,
But he that now is gone
Cannot do one.

Vile worms made feast on him; told is his story;
Dead . . . mangled . . . gory . . .
What price glory?

BAYARD SIMMONS.

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

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

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, August 17, Mr. Saphin. Highbury Corner, Wednesday, August 19, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 6.30, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, August 18, Mr. P. Goldman. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, August 21, Mr. L. Ebury. WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Corner of Deanery Road, Water Lane, Stratford): 7.0, Mr. E. Saphin.

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

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR.

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market): 7.30, Thursday, August 13, Mr. J. Clayton.

BURNLEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Burnley Market Place): 7.0, Sunday, Higham, 7.30, Monday, Burnley, 7.30, Tuesday, Nelson, Chapel Street, 7.30, Wednesday, Accrington Market, 7.30, Thursday, Burnley, 7.30, Friday. Mr. G. Whitehead will speak at these meetings.

BLYTH (Market Place): 7.0, Monday, August 17, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

CHESTER-LE-STREET (The Bridge): 8.0, Friday, August 14, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

HUNCOAT, 7.30, Monday, August 17, Mr. J. Clayton. LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths): 8.0, A Lecture. St. James Mount, Liverpool, 8.0, Wednesday, A Lecture.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Platts Fields): 3.0, Mr. J. V. Shortt (Liverpool)—"Schools of Scandal." 7.0, "Godless Goodness."

(Continued on page 527)

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(Continued from page 526)

MIDDLESBROUGH (Davidson Street): 7.0, Tuesday, August
18, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NELSON (Chapel Street): 8.0, Tuesday, August 18, Mr. J.
Clayton.

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Preston Market Place): 7.30, Mr.
P. Maughan—"Do Christians Think?"

QUAKER BRIDGE, 3.0 and 7.0, Sunday, August 16, Mr. J.
Clayton.

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

SOUTH SHIELDS BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30,
Thursday, August 13, Mr. A. Flanders.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue): 7.0,
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