

THE FREETHINKER

EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN

— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LVII.—No. 34

SUNDAY, AUGUST 22, 1937

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>How to Deal with an Atheist—The Editor</i>	529
<i>Sixty Years for Secularism—Minnermus</i>	530
<i>Thomas Paine: An Investigation—John M. Robertson</i>	531
<i>The Saints' Rest—T. H. Elstob</i>	533
<i>Idolatry—George Wallace</i>	534
<i>A French President and the Vatican—C. Bradlaugh Bonner</i>	534
<i>Problems of Chronology—H. Cutner</i>	538
<i>Russia's Perennial Problem—T. F. Palmer</i>	539
<i>God's Mercy—Beatrice Fraser</i>	540
<i>Thanking Heaven—F. A. Hornibrook</i>	541

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

Views and Opinions

How to Deal with an Atheist

FOR four years the Superintendent of the Chorley (Lancs.) Methodist Circuit has been holding religious meetings in the Cattle Market of Chorley. Other ministers have joined in, and even if they have not saved many souls, they probably hope that none has been lost. No one is such an adept at slaughtering an absent enemy as is the Christian preacher, and at the foot of every controversial pulpit there are piled up the mangled remains of scores of unbelievers who have been killed in their absence. But lately the religious harmony of the cattle-market was broken by the irruption of Mr. J. V. Shortt, of Liverpool. This is said, in the *Chorley Guardian*, to have roused "considerable interest, and some amount of concern." The interest lay with the public; the concern was the affair of the parsonry. A large multiple store selling at "cut" prices and opening near a small struggling shopkeeper could not have caused greater concern than Mr. Shortt's visit appears to have done in the breast of those ministers who had slain their thousands—of absentees—in the cattle-market. So the Rev. R. M. Carson rushed to the help of his brother Methodist, and declared war on the Atheist. Not where the Atheist was, but where he wasn't. He preached a sermon which the *Chorley Guardian* calls "outspoken," which is rather a sinister comment on the preacher, who is not, it would appear, given to being outspoken. But Mr. Carson does not believe in taking risks.

Mr. Carson gave to his sermon the title, "What shall we do with our Atheist?" And I am afraid I cannot congratulate him on either the method he has adopted or the originality of his question. It is a very old question, although I admit that among primitive peoples it does not arise. There are there no Atheists to save or damn. Savagery is the golden age of the gods. They are there in cohorts and they reign unquestioned. "What shall we do with our Atheist?" is a question that comes only with the growth of civil-

ization, something like sanitation and preventive medicine. To oblige Mr. Carson I do not, for the time being, mind his calling Atheism a disease of civilization. I will only submit that in that case it is a disease of advanced minds. There is no Atheist among savages, there is none among congenital idiots, and there is, I believe, none among the insane. I do not mean by this last that Atheists never go insane. I have known several, just as I have known plenty of godites, whom one would confidently assert were guarded by nature against excessive cerebral agitation or strain, and so protected from insanity, going insane. But when Atheists do go mad they appear to revert to some form of belief in God.

There were signs of Atheism in Egypt as it advanced in civilization, and there was a deal of Atheism among both the Romans and the Greeks. Mr. Carson will, if he is given to reading, find among the Greek theists most of the arguments that can be used against Atheism, but there is one striking omission. They did not slobber over their "poor lost brother," neither did they attribute the Atheism they met as due to Theists not being as good as they ought to be. If that were enough to create Atheism, there would be by this time no Theists left. The Greeks were not humbugs in their superstition, and they did not cant. There is this same feature of a development of Atheism at the time of the Renaissance. While the power of the Christian Church stood unquestioned in Christendom, and during the period when the Church was by its policy crushing the mentally best and breeding from the poorer type, there was very little Atheism about. There was Atheism in the more civilized Mohammedan countries, but not much in Christendom, during the "Dark Ages." But when the Renaissance (New Birth) arrived there was again a marked manifestation of Atheism. I would refer Mr. Carson to a very good work, although not an exhaustive one, *Atheism and the English Renaissance*, by G. T. Buckley, issued by the University of Chicago Press in 1932. He will also find a much more elaborate development of Atheism with the development of European culture and civilization. These things are really worthy of study, if Mr. Carson has any ambition effectively to reply to Atheism. He really ought to get some understanding of the subject. Even in the pulpit, where understanding is not vitally necessary, it helps. If my own writings on the subject would be of assistance, I should be pleased to send them, quite free. I would like to see Mr. Carson as well equipped as possible. At present the poor man is like one trying to bring down a new bombing plane with a sixpenny packet of fireworks.

* * *

God's way with Atheists

Mr. Carson points out there are two ways of dealing with Atheists. One is "God's way," as laid down in the Bible:—

If thy brother, the son of thy mother, or thy son, or the wife of thy bosom, or thy friend which is as thine own soul, entice thee secretly, saying, Let us go and serve other gods which thou hast not known . . . thou shalt not consent unto him . . . neither shalt thine eye pity him, neither shalt thou conceal him; but thou shalt surely kill him; thine hand shall be first upon him to put him to death.

That is one way—God's way—of dealing with the Atheist, and it was once a very fashionable way. Mr. Carnson evidently regrets that it is not a possible way at the moment. But, he says, we are not to say it is too strong or primitive or un-Christlike. He says, very regretfully,

in those days there were more severe loyalties to God than we care for to-day. The wife of your bosom was a murderer of your soul, more dangerous than any murderer of the body . . . and though we shrink from the infliction of the death penalty, there is still the divine penalty of death for such poisonous seduction. . . . Strong meat indeed for the weaker generation of to-day, but necessary.

That is the way in which Mr. Carnson would have dealt with "Our Atheist" in the good old days, and the way in which, evidently, he would deal with him to-day if others were strong in the faith. For the power behind the Secular Society is the Devil, and Christ said "If thine eye offend thee cut it out." But if Christianity be true and we are on earth to get our souls saved, then, as I have so often said, persecution of the Atheist is an act of social sanitation. The Atheist *ought* to be killed—if Christianity be true. Mr. Carnson is a true-blue, dyed-in-the-wool Christian. It is by such doctrines as he preaches that the Church established itself and maintained its power. No wonder the presence of Atheism in the cattle-market of Chorley raises him to such heights of eloquent denunciation.

* * *

Other Times other Manners

But we live in degenerate days. It is not fashionable to run about putting to death those who say, "let us go and serve other gods," so Mr. Carnson, of the Chorley Methodist Circuit, who has so surprised the *Chorley Guardian* by being outspoken, must adopt another plan of dealing with the Atheist. He thinks the Atheist who disturbs the peace of Chorley, and may lead souls in the wrong direction, has been brought to what he is by observing that Christians were not all good, consistent, honest men and women. And out of sheer disgust, because these Christians would not make "Jesus the rule of life," people became Atheists. But as it is no longer permitted to the Christian to kill the Atheist, we must "lift him in our love" and prayer, and unitedly carry him into the presence of the greater healer himself," then "will come the new life which he so greatly needs." Mr. Carnson would rather use the other plan, but as that is not workable, then the plan of "love" must be tried. If we cannot slaughter, let us slobber. If we cannot kill, let us try brain torture with prayer. Let us, he says, "try to make the Atheists even as we are." Really, this is some degrees worse than the "Thou shalt surely kill him." After all the death penalty would be quick in its administration. The new method would be to reduce the Atheist to the level of Mr. Carnson. Mr. Carnson says, in effect, we cannot apply the Bible treatment for Atheism, so let us make the Atheist as we are. And I think that if the Atheist were offered that alternative he would probably say, "Bring along your brick-bats; it will soon be over."

* * *

Christianity and Conduct

I doubt if Mr. Carnson can rise to it, but I can assure him that Atheists are not made what they are be-

cause they see that all Christians are not good men and women. That has nothing to do with it. If it were the existence of lying Christians, brutal Christians, thieving Christians, selfish Christians, swindling Christians, hypocritical Christians, and murderous Christians that made people Atheists, there would to-day be hardly any but Atheists alive. These kinds of Christians have always been as common as dead leaves in October. They have not disturbed Atheists in the least. If every Christian were a monument of goodness and truthfulness, it would not affect the Atheistic position in the least. The Atheist does not believe in a God because he *knows* that the belief in God is one of the world's oldest and most dangerous illusions. The retort that takes the form of pointing to the conduct of Christians is only of value as against those who argue that Christians are superior to other people. But it has nothing to do with the question of the existence of a god. Mr. Carnson represents a very common type of parson, the one who knows nothing of what can be said against his belief, and therefore cannot understand the belief he professes. The Atheist at least has the advantage of knowing what it is the Christian believes, and he finds that when real Christianity is placed before a believer, he usually disowns it as a caricature.

There is really only one way of dealing with the Atheist that decent men and women can adopt. That is, listening to one's reasons for being an Atheist and proving them to be unsound. It is no use threatening him, it is no use slobbering over him. Of the two he prefers the first method. There may be something of a man behind a threat; there is nothing but a fool or a knave behind a slobber. Last week I had to point out that a not-unfriendly critic was mistaken in thinking that the lower type of Christian exists only here and there in this country. If he reads these notes, I imagine he will find out how wrong he is in his conclusions. Mr. Carnson, in one respect, appears to be exactly where the most bigoted of his predecessors were over a century ago. In other respects his mentality goes back direct to pre-civilized times.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

Sixty Years for Secularism

"Not for delectations sweet,
Not the cushion and the slipper, not the peaceful and the studious,
Not the riches safe and palling, not for us the tame enjoyment.

Pioneers! O Pioneers!"—Whitman.

THE death of Arthur B. Moss removes a very familiar figure from the Freethought Movement, and reduces the small and dwindling number of the survivors of the "Old Guard," who served under the leadership of Charles Bradlaugh, the Napoleon of British Secularism. Few, indeed, will fail to assent to praise these pioneer soldiers. For the veterans are the link between the present and the past; that past of storm and peril, when the soldiers of Liberty arose almost every day to meet a fresh difficulty or a new danger. To be one of the "Old Guard" was in itself an honour; for they never knew defeat or surrender. A few of them still remain among us; to shame our weakness, and to stimulate our courage. Of these veterans few were better known than that of Arthur B. Moss, whose clever and entertaining pen had so often written for these columns, and whose voice had been so familiar on the lecture platform for two generations.

Born in London, eighty-two years ago, Moss joined the Freethought Movement in the "stormy seventies" of the last century. When quite a young man,

he saw that in Freethought alone was there any hope for Democracy. No man in the Movement ever set to work more vigorously to qualify himself for acting as a teacher of his fellows, and few have waged the good fight with more ability and tenacity. Starting life as a clerk, he afterwards became a journalist, and educated himself not only in the world of books, but also in the book of the world. His knowledge of Freethought literature was as remarkable as his power of debate; while his keen sense of humour saved him from any tendency to dullness, and his plain common sense enabled him to meet with ease the platitudes of clerical triflers, who imagined that a mere lecturer could be brushed aside without trouble. As a writer, his output of books and pamphlets was remarkable. Nor did he stop at purely propagandist effort, for in several plays he displayed literary capacity, which, under happier conditions, would have secured for him general recognition from the theatrical world.

Moss's journalistic career, and his later association with the old London School Board, brought him into very close contact with the bed-rock life of a great city, and the mysteries of the Modern Babylon were no more secrets to him than they were to Dickens or to Hogarth. Years ago he accompanied George R. Sims and Fred Barnard, the black-and-white artist, in their memorable travels through London's underworld, and helped to prepare the material out of which Sims wrote his famous work, *How the Poor Live*, a book which startled quiet folks in sheltered homes, and paved the way for later legislative effort. Indeed, there were few phases of working-class life with which Moss was unacquainted.

The outstanding features of Moss's busy and useful career were his tenacity and courage. A tireless worker, he delivered thousands of lectures, and took part in scores of debates. And these, be it remembered, were undertaken in the scant leisure of a busy life. Nor was it "roses all the way." More than once he came into conflict with the authorities on account of his outspoken Freethought opinions. In exercise of his right as an elector, he asked a Member of Parliament to support Bradlaugh's Affirmation Bill. The member, a typical Christian, promptly replied by requesting the Education Authority to dismiss Moss, and the result was that he was actually prohibited from lecturing and even advertising his own publications. Moss won that battle after delivering a powerful speech before the School Board, which led to the rescinding of the resolution. Nor is this all, for the unsubduable old Freethinker carried the war into the enemy's camp by himself entering municipal life, and as a Councillor defending the principles he loved, and to which he had devoted his life.

Moss's courage was of the strong, silent kind. There was nothing of Donnybrook Fair about it. Physical courage, especially in crowds, is cheap and common enough. Millions of men will fight and die for almost anything or nothing. But moral courage is very rare. Few men are able to stand against a mob; fewer still are able to stand, animated solely by principles, against an enraged community. Arthur Moss was of that rare breed. When he stood for what he saw to be the truth, he was as steadfast as a hill, and nearly as quiet in his resistance. He never asked what he would lose by so doing. The satisfaction of his conscience was his sole reward. For sixty years he never wavered in holding aloft the banner of Freethought. And for this, if nothing else, let this brave old veteran be honoured by his comrades.

If Freethinkers need any example to stir them on to give themselves in their great cause, they will find it here; in the quiet harvest of a laborious life. There may be men and women among us to-day who are ask-

ing perhaps with a note of complaint, whether they have not done their share, and whether the time has not come for others to take their turn. Such questions are never asked by the men and women who count in the history of a great movement. They go on giving themselves because the spirit of duty and of loyalty is within them. The unnumbered laggards remain behind, dawdling through their lives, and passing unhonoured without monument of fame, or record of achievement. The real men, the men who help to make a movement a live one, work on and on, ever in harness, to fulfil their lives. In age men's minds are apt to get indurated against new ideas. Not so with Moss. His gaze was ever towards the wide horizon of the future. As a Freethinker and as a practical humanitarian, he was a public benefactor. Let us salute the memory of one of the truest who ever drew breath.

Indeed, we do well to doff our hats to the memory of this veteran of the Army of Human Liberation. There is something more, however, in those eighty years than the life of one individual. There is the summary of the biggest change that has ever come over the life of mankind during the lifetime of one man. The greatest change during the past century is due to the undoubted fact that Supernaturalism is played out, and men's minds are slowly broadening. And Arthur Moss took a man's share of the gigantic work of unloosening the shackles of superstition, and challenging "the lie at the lips of the priest."

MIMNERMUS.

Thomas Paine: An Investigation

[The following essay on Paine was published in 1888. It has for a long time been out of print. Recent discussions on Paine justify its re-appearance.]

IN Mr. Leslie Stephen's *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, there occur a number of allusions to Thomas Paine, and in particular two passages in which the historian discusses Paine's work as an anti-theologian and as a politician, prefacing the second with what purports to be a brief sketch of his later life and an estimate of his character. Mr. Stephen's work is in two volumes; and his account of the *Age of Reason*, without biographic elucidation, occurs in the first; the criticism of the *Rights of Man* coming separately, with the elucidation, in the second, where it was necessary to contrast Paine with Burke. The biographical notice, which is extremely brief, presents the markedly hostile version given of Paine's life and character in the professed biography of him by Cheetham, Mr. Stephen making no reference to any other authority, though he shows he is aware of the existence of other Lives. The falsity of Cheetham's and Mr. Stephen's account has been pointed out before now; several subsequent biographies having exposed Cheetham's, and Mr. Stephen's paragraph being indirectly answered for English readers by Mr. Moncure Conway's valuable article in the *Fortnightly Review* of March, 1879. A direct and explicit answer to Mr. Stephen's statements and criticism as a whole, however, seems still wanting; and as his book continues to be a standard source of information on Paine for English readers, such an examination seems worth attempting in the interests of truth and justice.

I quote first Mr. Stephen's biographical paragraph as it appears in his first edition:—

We have already encountered Paine as an assailant of the religious belief of the day. No ingenuity of hero-worship can represent him as an altogether edifying phenomenon. Indeed, he is commonly made

to serve the purpose of a scarecrow in religious tracts. One of his biographers describes his first interviews with the old reprobate after his final flight to America. Paine appeared shabbily dressed, with a beard of a week's growth, and a "face well carbuncled, fiery as the setting sun." Sitting over a table loaded with beer, brandy, and a beefsteak, he repeated the introduction of his reply to Watson; a process which occupied half an hour, and was performed with perfect clearness, in spite of the speaker's intoxication. The details of his habits during the few remaining years of his life are simply disgusting; he was constantly drunk, filthy beyond all powers of decent expression, brutal to the woman he had seduced from her husband, constantly engaged in the meanest squabbles, and, in short, as disreputable an old wretch as was at that time to be found in New York. Two or three well-meaning persons tried to extort some sort of confession from the dying infidel; but he died in a state of surly adherence to his principles. The wretched carcass, about which he seems to have felt some anxiety, was buried in his farm. (*History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*, ii. 261.)

The "one of his biographers" here cited is Cheetham, whose relations with Paine, before he composed Paine's *Life*, were those of open and violent enmity; and it is to Cheetham that Mr. Stephen owes his statements as to filthiness and drunkenness. On the points as to whether Paine, immediately after landing from a long voyage, undertaken in a weak state of health—for it was then that Cheetham professes to have first met him—may really have appeared shabbily dressed and unshaven, it seems scarcely necessary to spend inquiry. It is enough to point out that the devotion of one-third of the paragraph of biography in Mr. Stephen's *History* to an enemy's description of Paine, made up of such details as these, is more suggestive of unthinking prejudice than of literary judgment. The "face well carbuncled" I pass over for the moment; and the clause on the "table loaded with beer, brandy, and a beefsteak" might perhaps be left to dispose of itself, with the slight help of italics. Mr. Stephen is evidently trying to create the impression that Paine's way of life was brutal and disgusting, and to that end he catches at the items in question. Beer and a beefsteak, it will probably be admitted, might innocently appear on any man's table; and even brandy is not unknown in respectable households in our time, to say nothing of the drinking usages of Paine's. But the alliterative effect got by coupling it with the beer and the beefsteak is calculated to convey the requisite idea to readers who combine sensitiveness with carelessness, and so the description is produced. Of readers who possess only the former quality I have to ask pardon for pausing over such topics, a passing comment being necessitated by Mr. Stephen's having thought them fit garniture for a *History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century*.

To come to more important matters, I would ask the reader first to notice the rare verisimilitude of the statement that Paine while in a state of intoxication repeated with "perfect clearness," at half-an-hour's length, the "introduction" of his reply to Watson.¹ Most unprejudiced inquirers would pronounce the story an unpalatable falsehood; and a falsehood, I think, it will finally be pronounced when the evidence as to Paine's way of life has been set forth. But by the way of prefatory indication of the value of Cheetham's testimony, and of the general trustworthiness

¹ All that has been published of Paine's reply to the Bishop of Landaff might be recited in about half-an-hour, and there is no part that can be marked off as introductory. If Paine recited all or part of what is published, he was recapitulating a close and detailed argument. Mr. Stephen, of course, attempts no investigation on the point.

of Mr. Stephen's paragraph, it will be expedient to state facts as to the allegation of Paine's having seduced a woman from her husband and then behaved brutally to her.

There is, I think, only one such story current concerning Paine, and the allusion is doubtless to Madame Bonneville, the wife of one Nicholas Bonneville of Paris, who with her children came to America with Paine when the latter finally returned to his adopted country. Paine had boarded with Bonneville during part of his stay in Paris, and is said to have been "much indebted" to his hospitality. Bonneville had often declared his intention to emigrate to the United States as soon as he could, and when Paine was able to leave France he invited the Bonneville family to accompany him, which they promptly agreed to do.

But (says Sherwin), as Mr. Bonneville could not get ready by the time appointed, it was agreed that his wife and three sons should embark with Mr. Paine, and that their father should follow them as soon as he conveniently could. Whether this was a design on the part of Bonneville to rid himself of his wife is more than I can say, but it is certain that he never troubled himself about her or the children for some years afterwards, and they were entirely abandoned to the generosity of Mr. Paine. In addition to his estate at New Rochelle, Mr. Paine had likewise a small house with some land attached to it, at Bordentown; these he offered to Mrs. Bonneville, and proposed to establish her as a schoolmistress, but this she declined. Mr. Paine was therefore charged with her entire maintenance, and that of the children, an act of kindness which he cheerfully performed. . . . It is a fact that they scarcely ever lived together after our author's return to America. (W. T. Sherwin's *Life of Thomas Paine*, 1819, pp. 208-210.)

Sherwin is partly in error as to the "entire maintenance," since it appears that Madame Bonneville gave lessons in French to help to maintain herself. But as to the substantial truth of his story there can be no reasonable doubt. Taken by itself, it might stand as an unsupported testimony by a friend of Paine; but it is sufficiently made good by the result of the legal proceedings instituted by Madame Bonneville against Cheetham, when the latter published his slanderous work after Paine's death. Cheetham declared Madame Bonneville to be Paine's mistress, offering no proof save an angry letter from one Carver, written after a quarrel with Paine. On the action for slander being raised, Cheetham's counsel admitted the falsehood of the charge, and pleaded simply that Carver's letter justified Cheetham, as a historian, in repeating the statement. At first it was pleaded that the statement was true, but when "several ladies of the first distinction, whose daughters had been entrusted to the care of Madame Bonneville to learn the French language, appeared in court, and attested to the unblemished character of this much-injured female," this plea was abandoned, Carver besides backing out of his statement under examination. Further, Carver later published the avowal that his letter had been written in anger, and that it was "first printed by Cheetham without my consent for base purposes, after he became a tory and political turncoat"; also printing a letter of reconciliation he had addressed to Paine when the latter was on his deathbed, with the remark: "This shows what opinion I had of him; I think he was one of the greatest men that ever lived." (See the documents in the preface to G. Vale's *Life of Thomas Paine*, New York, 1841.) The judge in the libel case, in summing up for the jury, took occasion to remind them that Cheetham's book was calculated to aid the cause of Christianity. The jury, however, brought in a verdict against him with £100 damages; and Cheetham, who had admitted the falsity of his statement, was ordered to expunge it from later edi-

tions of his book. (See *Refutation of the Calumnies on the Character of Thomas Paine*, Providence, R. I. 1830, p. 2.) Thus a wholly or partly Christian jury pronounced the story a slander; Cheetham and his informant alike withdrew from it; and it is left for Mr. Stephen to revive it in an important work without a word of qualification or an attempt at inquiry.

It is worth noting, finally, as to the Bonneville episode, that Paine left some money by his will to Nicolas Bonneville, and the bulk of his property to Madame Bonneville, in trust for her and her children "in order that she may bring them well up, give them good and useful learning, and instruct them in their duty to God and the practice of morality." The aspersion thrown out by Mr. Stephen as to Paine's "brutality" to Madame Bonneville rests partly on Carver's letter, in which Paine appears as disputing a payment on Madame Bonneville's account, partly on other statements of Cheetham. We have seen something of that authority's trustworthiness; but there is yet further evidence to be taken.

(Reprinted) JOHN M. ROBERTSON.

(To be continued)

The Saints' Rest

OFFICIAL Christianity has always understood the value of inducements. The Immortality that Jesus brought to light took quite concrete shapes in Heaven and Hell. It was *paganism* that was responsible for such ethical barrenness as: Virtue is its own reward. Christianity was a *human* system; it understood the common man and his leaning towards a good bargain. Jesus spoke to the common people, not to highbrows. Rejoice, he said, when people revile you, for great will be your reward in Heaven. If you do this, thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward you openly. If you do that, you have no reward. The children of man clamour for that which pays, so Jesus, throughout the Sermon of the Mount, emphasized material dividends. There was even a material prize offered for meekness. *The meek shall inherit the earth.* The prize was offered. It may even have been delivered, for the quantity of earth, it will be noted, was not specified.

Heaven and Hell! Heaven for the saved! Hell for non-Christians! Hell! Hell may not be as hot as it was, but, even to the most modern of Modernists, it is still something unmistakably nasty. Heaven, on the other hand, is a *fine* place. There was difficulty in definition, but what of that? If Hell were made disagreeable enough, Heaven would shine in comparison. Make Hell hot enough and all would rush to board the good ship *Salvation*, bound for any port that registered fewer degrees.

The Church followed the lead of Jesus, but added a few inducements of its own. Those who qualify for the Saints' Rest are given a tolerably comfortable passage in this world. Those who fail to qualify are given Hell in both worlds. These are the inducements that have been found to make mankind line up in queues. It may not be a lofty Gospel, but it is lofty enough for the Christian Church. It serves. Thousands of Infidel Dervishes have in battle thrown themselves again and again, against the British square, until not one man was left alive. These poor benighted ones believed they were going direct to Paradise, so what value did they attach to their miserable hour of life? It is reserved for Christians to show them the magnificent media via. It is Christians who believe they are going to Paradise, and yet try to keep out of it by calling in the best

medical knowledge at command, and running up the banner, SAFETY FIRST. The Saints' Rest! Yes, that will be very nice—but all in good time. It is not Christianlike to show undue haste. Christians are not gluttons; they do not rush to the table when the dinner-gong goes. Why then should they show unseemly haste in endeavouring to grasp the Christian's reward? Heaven is their Home, but as long as there are sinners to be saved from the bonfire, it is only fitting that they should, first and foremost, pay attention to the deplorable condition of the unsaved.

The Saints' Rest! What kind of place is it that is going to prove restful to those who have in the lottery picked the right turnstile and found themselves on the narrow road that led to salvation. On the Broad Road that led to the Bonfire they have noticed Uncle Willie, Aunt Emily, and, worse than that, their own children, little Tommy and Peggie. None of these has been attracted by the Means of Grace. Uncle Willie, for instance, spent most of his energies pouring scorn upon them. Not one of them ever went to Church, took a Sacrament or made a Confession. And they, bound for the Saints' Rest, are (Praise the Lord!) going to be eternally happy, knowing that the less fortunate ones are perpetually in want of a glass of cold water. And yet the last thing that Uncle Willie did was to pay the saint's insurance premium for him, stipulating neither as to interest nor repayment. But I, the Saint, have put in my Church attendances, put money in the plate, made my confessions (I remember confessing once that I had sold Uncle Willie at full price a crate of doubtful eggs), been polite to the priest, and now I have earned my reward. Perhaps the Lord in his infinite mercy may be good enough to bring forgetfulness to me about Uncle Willie and—and—my own dear children.

What is this Saint's Rest? Whatever it is, it is eternal. It is there and it can't be ended or mended. It just was, is and is to come. Joy, incessant joy, in the presence of God! God will see to it that the joy does not pall as all joy does in this world. We do not know how this will be managed, but as we have Faith that great will be our reward, we know it will be managed somehow. A billion of years in the New Jerusalem we shall spend, and the countenances of the Saints in Glory will still be things of beauty; the Song of Moses and the Lamb will satisfy our ear; the fate of Uncle Willie will fail to disturb us. The B.B.C. in this country knows that the public get sick even of the best, and that quite rapidly, but in Heaven, the Saints' power of appreciation will never abate.

They used to *mediate* on the Saints' Rest, once upon a time. They believed in the Reward that Jesus had promised them and searched the Scriptures that they might have glimpses of the eternal felicity which was to be theirs. And when the Scriptures said a thing they didn't like, they accepted it. They didn't say "Bah, I'm not having that!" That attitude was reserved for the age when believers possess more intelligence but less honesty. In the seventeenth century, Richard Baxter wrote a book called *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*, a book which brought many sinners to repentance. It was a sincere attempt to popularize God's promises to the Saints. And when Baxter came to a Hot Hell, he accepted it. That did not mean he liked it: He thought God knew better than he did what was good for Uncle Willie. He was a believer. He was not a person who read "Infidel" objections, and in order to answer them, played ducks and drakes with the Gospel of Christ. He had a brain. It convinced him that mankind had had a revelation from God, and he thought that if God had taken that trouble it would be as well to see what God had re-

vealed. He didn't pick and choose. He didn't tell you what Jesus *really* meant. He didn't have the presumption to say that here and there, and also here and again there, Jesus couldn't have meant what he said. It seemed reasonable to him that in a Revelation to Man, what God said and what God meant would be identical. It did not seem reasonable to him that God had given the correct meaning only to *Holy Men*, particularly when he looked upon these Holy Men and noticed their humility and their odour. He thought it unlikely that God should have go-betweens. That Richard Baxter accepted Hell Fire and the Inanities of the Saints' Rest must count to him for Honesty. And Honesty is no small thing, for to be honest as this world goes is to be one man picked out of Ten Thousand.

What was in essence the teaching of *The Saints' Everlasting Rest*? The Saint's Rest was the happy state of a dead Christian, the state when he was able to experience the endless enjoyment of God. Doubts would not trouble the believer any longer. Neither would the temptations of Satan, and, oh Blessed Mercy of God, Hell would not be mixed with Heaven. But evidently the veil would occasionally be removed, for one of the Torments of the Damned would be to see and hear the Saints praising and rejoicing, while they, poor souls, were howling and lamenting. This—it is impossible to resist the conclusion—Baxter thought would give great satisfaction to the Saint. To acquire the Saints' Rest, it was necessary to be born again in Christ Jesus. This was the only way to save your soul, and it enabled you to assist others to save theirs. You acquired a *heavenly* mind, for it was clear that heaven was the only worthy object to apply one's mind to. Our house and home were above; our hearts must be weaned from all things here below.

Christianity was a live belief three hundred years ago; as it was alive, dead was all hope of a happy world. "Brother, what of your soul?" and "How shall you spend Eternity?" were the only questions that merited attention. And who shall say that from the Christian's premiss, there is not logic in that attitude? What a drop is Man's Allotted Span in the Ocean of Eternity! Can it be wondered at, as Gibbon reminded us, that it was not in this world that the Christian desired to be either agreeable or useful?

T. H. ELSTON.

Idolatry

VERY devout worshippers cannot escape idolatry. Their God, they say, is omnipresent, infinite, etc. How then can any attempt to worship a being with these attributes be anything else but symbolatry?

Churches are called "Houses of God," "Places of worship," etc. Worship is a finite thing, and it requires a finite place, and a finite God. This finite God may have a visible, material form, which may be kept hidden in a little box, or it may occupy a prominent position in the house set apart for it in any, or every, home.

Self-interested people made our religions, and our laws. For instance: Moses, after making the ten commandments, felt it necessary to go up into the mist covering the top of the mountain to get the superstitious background essential to ensure obedience to them. But whether his efforts met with proper recognition or not Exod. xxxiii. 23, would seem to leave some little doubt.

Idolatry, or anthropomorphism, Lubbock tells us, is the fifth of six progressive stages in the history of religion. The ancient Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, the modern Chinese, Burmese, Hindoos, etc., are all in that fifth stage of religious development.

The following three phases characterize idolatry: (1) The uneducated worship the idol as if it were in reality a god. (2) The enlightened use it as an aid in worship-

ping an unseen God. (3) Probably the highest form of idolatry—a mental conception of a God. The forms indicated by (1) and (2) Isaiah must have been cognisant of for in xlii, 17, and xlv. 10-17 he denounces (1) the lower form of idolatry, while in xl. 18-25, he censures (2) the higher form of it.

Moses, too, seems to have been conscious of (1) and (2), for when he descended the mountain and found the people worshipping the golden calf he proclaimed a feast to Jehovah, but the people, dominated by the lower form of idolatry, preferred the Golden Calf. No wonder he directed the second commandment against idolatry!

In the opinion of many religious people images are not idols. Images were introduced into many churches about A.D. 300, for instruction only, but gradually became objects of worship. About 726 a controversy arose with regard to their use. The Emperor Leo III., surnamed the Isaurian, issued edicts against them, and carried them out with relentless rigour in 736.

Between the doll of a girl and the idol of a worshipper there is a close affinity, and it is significant that the restoration of image-worship was brought about by a woman (the Empress Irene) in 780. The second council of Nice sanctioned them in 787. But in the modern Greek church pictures instead of actual images are used. The latter are employed in the Roman Catholic Church. Most Protestant Churches exclude them from their places of worship, or if they admit them, do so only for ornament. Even so!

How civilized we seem to have become! But in seeming only. Our civilization is not yet skin deep. Fashions and manners may change but customs remain. Bacon tells us that—"Manners maketh the man." May we infer that manners unmasketh the savage? I think not!

"The ghost of the Brute that is walking and haunting us yet" is too much in evidence. It may be more important to have perfect table manners—to eat one's dinner correctly than to earn it honestly; to be more efficiently and artistically criminal than to remain vulgar and virtuous. In manners and fashions we have changed, but in reality very little. Our life is made up of savage survivals. But the savage was, in his thoughtless violence, inefficient, while we to-day are so studiously efficient as to have shamed the savage.

So idolatry and current barbarisms must stay with us for many generations yet, until they are finally uprooted and man is free.

GEORGE WALLACE.

A French President and the Vatican

PROGRESSIVE men who attain long years are often accused of fossilizing into Conservatives. This was in some sort true of the late Gaston Doumergue, President of the French Republic.

In December, 1921, he opposed in the Sénat a proposal made by Aristide Briand to re-enter into diplomatic relations with the Vatican. He protested that every effort should be made to assure to France its independence in foreign policy, and that nothing should be done which might enfeeble the secular policy established by the Third Republic. The Vatican, it was affirmed, had at no time during the war employed its influence on behalf of the defenders of democracy and freedom, but had endeavoured to undermine the internal peace of France, to nullify its secular legislation or to counteract their effect. "Collaboration with the Holy See, collaboration with a power which is more subtle, cunning and formidable than democratic government by means of public opinion, is to prepare for the day, and that day will come quickly, when the whole policy of the country will be directed by Rome." The Vatican, he submitted, hoped for a German victory as a means of re-establishing the Papal power in France. "I have heard say that if France had only had an ambassador to the Holy See during the war, the Pope would have shown a very different attitude towards France. What, is it possible for a fallible ambassador to teach Him Who is Infalible on which side are Justice and Liberty!" Doumergue also pointed out that Briand

himself had asked, in 1904, if it could possibly be to the advantage of a democracy to maintain relations with a power which was based on tradition, and had showed itself incapable of adapting itself to the views, hopes and needs of a progressive people, and that Briand had then called on the Combes Government not to inflict on the Republic the shame of a capitulation to the Vatican. Then added Doumergue, "Seventeen years ago this rebuke was made to me as to the rest of my colleagues. Seventeen years have gone by and I have not yet capitulated."

Yet Doumergue it was who, as President of the Republic, handed to Mgr. Ceretti, the Papal Nuncio at Paris, his Cardinal's cap, the emissary of the very power which he denounced.

Gaston Doumergue owed his entry into the French Parliament and his election to the Presidency of the Sénat to the Radical Party, of which he was for long a militant member, but he became President of the Republic in opposition to Painlevé as the candidate of the conservative factions.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Acid Drops

According to the *Sunday Chronicle* of August 15, two London Hikers saw the Virgin Mary walking on a lonely mountain track four miles from Llanthony. The Virgin was seen walking in this same spot some four years ago by some children. The vision was wearing a blue gown, which, as everyone knows is the Virgin's favourite colour for a dress. It is not for us to say that the Virgin was not there, but we do desire to enter a word of caution. Virgins who take to wandering about lonely parts of the country, unattended, are likely to suffer in their reputation, and it is bad policy to so openly provide material for scandal. Moreover, there is, we believe, a monastery near or at Llanthony, and one must bear in mind the Protestant jibe that while it may readily be admitted that many virgins went into monasteries, there is no evidence that many came out again. In these days the Virgin ought to be more careful than ever in choosing the scene of her wanderings. Or if she will wander in lonely places, she might go as a hiker with shorts and knapsack. Or, if she cannot bring herself to this, why not make her appearance in Piccadilly Circus, or Leicester Square, where thousands could confirm the visitation? Then she could come in her famous blue robe, and set a fashion that would outdo the hats of Marina. This celestial vision business needs properly organizing.

The Rev. Ensor Walters is delighted with the religious services of the B.B.C. He feels they are answering "the cry of the human soul for God." But according to our religious leaders, the human soul has always been crying for God, and it does seem strange, making every allowance for God's well-known perversity in answering prayers, that he should have waited for this answer to be given to the human soul until now, and then only when a human soul has taken out a ten-shilling licence. We wonder that Sir John Reith does not advertise "The soul's cry for God answered, ten shillings only. No extra charge for families." This suggestion is offered gratis, and it would not infringe the B.B.C. well known rule, never to advertise anything but its own publications.

But just as Mr. Ensor Walters sees a way of saving mankind, the Rev. Robert Menzies writes in the *Christian World* that "The Church's means of grace are neglected by the generality of mankind" and "it is notorious that public worship is more honoured in the breach than in the observance." There we are! And it would seem either that the B.B.C. religious services are not answering the soul's cry for God, or the bleat of the belated soul is not for God at all, or the reply given by the Churches is not satisfactory, or the B.B.C. is bluffing listeners and

the Rev. Ensor Walters is just joining the B.B.C. in a colossal game of misrepresentation. It is not for us to say which assumption is correct.

Here is a fine illustration of the mentality of the City Temple preacher, the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead. He is dealing with the fact of the funeral of a little child, and he pictures God as saying, "This is not my intention. . . . You (the parents) ought to have taken better care of the life I entrusted to you." But anyone other than a popular preacher would have had the wit to see that one might turn and ask God, "Why, if, and when you sent this little child into the world, did you not place the child in better hands? As you could easily have selected suitable parents as unsuitable ones why did you not act with at least the common sense and decency that human beings would have acted? The responsibility for the child's death is yours, Oh Lord. It is idle for you to blame the instruments that you selected." But probably Mr. Weatherhead judges the mentality of his followers, and so can indulge his foolishness with impunity.

From the *Washington Post*—A Texas Evangelist has published a list of 721 sins. We are sending for a copy, as its barely possible that we may have missed something.

The crack Atlantic liner "The Queen Mary," is as careful to provide for all kinds of religious tastes as are His Majesty's prisons—where the first question asked of a newcomer is, "What religion?" On the "Queen Mary," for the first-class passengers, there are separate worshipping-pens for the Roman Catholics, the Episcopalians and Presbyterians. The third-class passengers have merely a "General Service." We should not be surprised to find out that there is with these select first-class worshippers a similar separation in heaven. It reminds one of the French *Grande Dame* of the Court of Louis the Fourteenth, who on hearing from her priest that she stood some danger of being sent to hell, remarked, "I fancy God will think twice before he damns a person of my quality." The brotherhood of man among Christians has always been of a kind peculiar to itself.

We have more than once called attention to the B.B.C.'s comic parson, the Rev. W. H. Elliott. Mr. Elliott has an article (Syndicated) in one of the Sunday preventatives of cerebral activity, the *Sunday Pictorial*, in which he talks about (we had almost said, discuss) a cure for worry. He says to the worrying and anxious man:—

For myself, I don't mind telling you that life is too much for me. I am not equal to its demands, and I cannot solve its problems. The only thing then is to trust oneself as a child to the guidance of One who knows all, and can do all that needs to be done. That is religion.

We agree, that is religion. Don't worry, and as you may begin to worry, if you give yourself to thinking, then don't think. That is sound religious advice. And we can answer for it—having listened to Mr. Elliott several times—that no better object lesson in not thinking is to be found in one of Mr. Elliott's sermons. He is one of the few parsons, who, to this extent, practises what he preaches.

The humbug of the Bristol Orphanage, founded by George Muller, being maintained by prayer, has been so often exposed that one is a little surprised to find a journal such as the *Christian World* putting it forward in a leading article as an example of the power of prayer. George Muller was a very artful gentleman who took care to have it advertised that he was not going to ask anyone for money, but intended to rely entirely upon prayer. And ever since 1834, that advertisement has been kept well before the Christian public. But between asking for money and advertising the fact that one is doing a certain work which needs gifts, but relies upon the power of prayer to get it, only a Christian advocate can detect a difference. If the editor of the *Christian*

World has a real faith in the power of prayer to do things—minus advertising—let him decide on starting an institution that requires funds with which to commence and rely upon prayer for the funds, but without saying a word to anyone. If this can be done properly and fairly, we undertake to match all that comes, solely and exclusively through prayer, pound for pound. That challenge, if it is accepted, might really demonstrate the power of prayer, and also another thing—which seems to stand in equal need of evidence—the honesty and straightforwardness of Christian advocates.

The *Christian World* also refers to the wonderful work of faith-healing done by the Rev. Leslie Weatherhead at the City Temple. We have read of his "wonderful work," and can only conclude that Mr. Weatherhead is either another religious Fakir, or is quite ignorant of elementary psychological processes. There is not a doctor in existence who does not, and there are few human beings in existence who take an interest in their fellows who do not, give help by the "faith" that one man has in another. As we said last week, hysteria plays a part in the majority of ailments, and a feeling of confidence in what is being done by a friend or an attendant is always a help towards mental and physical recovery. People are helped by the colour of the medicine they swallow, by the belief that they will get better, and in many other ways. These are facts known to medical men, to all students of psychology, and have no more to do with what Mr. Weatherhead implies by faith-healing—that is a cure by God in answer to prayers—than divine help has to do with picking out the winner of a race with a pin. Mr. Weatherhead, if he knows anything about psychology and human nature, must know this to be true, and if he understands this subject his pretence that it comes from God is just a play upon the weakness of those who pay attention to him. But he cannot have it both ways; he can hardly claim honesty and understanding. What we should like Mr. Weatherhead to give the public is the exact and certified number of those who come to him for help, and the number of those who are really and permanently benefited by his faith-healing quackery. We might then contrast them with those who are helped by a "faith" that has nothing at all to do with religion, and might even be definitely atheistic in character.

The Church Union of Sociology had a meeting, the other day, in which many Christian speakers gave their views as to what to do in the present crisis, whether Christians should be on the left or right, or in between? They agreed that "the most definitely anti-Christian movements are social and collectivist, and if not formally atheistic, they are neo-pagan with an idolatry of state, class or race." The Rev. V. A. Demant summed up the discussion by claiming that "Catholic social action must find its first principle and its power in the uncaused Being of God." He was opposed to "Protestant pessimism," and came to the conclusion that in "the Church, however imperfect and apparently impotent, there is always implicit the only solution of the problem." But, whatever other solution could the Rev. gentleman come to? He is in the Church, an Anglo-Catholic who believes everything, even in an "uncaused" God—whatever that is. Of course, the Church, that is his own Church, or his own conception of the Church, plus the uncaused God, *must* be the cure for all ills. But all this has been said so often before there was hardly need to say it all over again.

A barber of Belgrade, in July, 1914, fired at a pontoon on the River Save. A Hungarian cabinet-maker was wounded by the shot. The barber's shot was the first of the "World War"; the cabinet-maker was the first man wounded. The latter was exempted from further service, and both prospered owing to the "fame" they acquired by opening hostilities. Both died recently, and a Sunday paper heads the news, "First Two *Heroes* of the war." Here we have an example of the strange and wonderful mentality of pressmen in 1937!

An enlightened cleric was recently quoted in this column as testifying to the total absence of good Hymns for children. We are sure that there are also no good Prayers for children. Many of us have suffered in our youth by being taught "with our first feeble accents" to "utter utter nonsense!" The latest illustrations given by the *Christian World* seem no improvement on the general low standard. Yet the writer of the *Christian World* "Woman's Letter Box," thinks her readers will like those from which we select the following drivel:—

Let angels through the darkness spread
Their holy wings above my bed,
And keep me safe because I am
The heavenly Shepherd's little lamb;
Teach me to do as I am told,
And help me be as good as gold.

Father, whom I cannot see,
Look down from heaven on little me,
Thank you, God, for all I have;
Keep and bless all those I love;
Help me always, God to do
Just as You would wish me to.

Our deepest sympathy goes with the poor little devils of children who are fed upon such appalling stuff. It lends point to a remark once made by G. B. Shaw, that a child's worst enemies are its parents. Still, these hymns are useful in enabling the outside public to realize what is so often meant by "Christian education."

Two clergymen write in the same number of the *Listener* about Broadcasting Religion. One famous cleric says: "My own belief is that only those listen-in to the sermons and services who are interested in them. It is only the church-going public which applauds broadcast religion. . . . There is no evidence whatever that broadcasting has effected any improvement in the attendance at the public worship of the churches. On the contrary, all the evidence points the other way." After so decisive an opinion, the personal assurance of the Rev. Porter Goff to the opposite effect falls particularly flat. It is incredible that any casual listener-in could possibly be favourably impressed by the specimen sermons offered on the Radio. For instance, take the Rev. Porter Goff! If ever that gentleman is amusing, entertaining or informative, it certainly is not when broadcasting.

Sandylands Promenade, Morecombe Bay, has a big new Methodist Church with an up-to-date minister whose innovations would make "the rude forefathers" of Methodism turn in their graves. Fitting comment is supplied by a malicious bill-poster who has chosen the wall adjacent to the church for the display of a gigantic announcement which reads: "The Great Broadcasting Show."

Fifty Years Ago

Was it not the late Lord Iddesleigh, formerly Sir Stafford Northcote, who originated the phrase *Pious opinions*? Certain opinions, whether true or false, are pious; that is they tend to edification, or to the glory of God. The extreme form of this theory manifested itself in the pious forgeries and frauds of the Church, and constitute a miserable spectacle to anyone who wishes to preserve a respect for his kind. Milder forms still abound. It is a pious opinion, although there is no evidence to support it, that every leading Freethinker is a scoundrel. It is a pious opinion, although twenty-four hours' study would correct it, that Freethinkers are afraid to die. It is a pious opinion that swearing is an excellent thing in our courts of law, though perjury is rife. It is a pious opinion that belief in future rewards and punishments is conducive to morality, though our gaols are filled with ladies and gentlemen of that persuasion. It is a pious opinion that while scholars and rich people may dabble safely with scepticism, it is a terrible thing for the less-educated and poorer classes. Lastly it is a pious opinion, in certain circles, that although religion is played out it will never do to say so, at least in public.

The Freethinker, August 21, 1887.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTÉ

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

We regret that by some means the last paragraph but one in last week's article by Lady Simon, "The Recall to Freethought or Turning the Tables," was not finished as the author left it. The complete paragraph should have read as follows:—

"Such common ground as this should tend towards unity, and bring home to Freethinkers of all persuasions (not excluding the Archbishop of Canterbury, or the Pope of Rome) the case there is for following a lead often given by writers to the *Times*, and forming a United Freethought Front against those who regard Freethinkers as a danger to society and little better than criminals. Probably the best way to bring this about would be to follow up the Archbishop's "Recall to Religion" with a "Recall to Freethought." This should equally well suit Freethinkers sailing under their own colours, and those who hoist the many coloured banners of the Churches, since it leaves to the latter a free hand to add to the Freethought of religion, while the former have already got all the Freethought they want."

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.

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

The Rev. E. J. Pasfield writes expressing his admiration for our recent "Views and Opinions," but disagrees with the concluding paragraph, in which we say that religion has always possessed the quality of moralizing evil things. All we can say is history and experience justify our saying so. Slavery, for example, was for generations justified on religious grounds, so was persecution for religious differences, so was burning old women and children for witchcraft, so was the slandering of opponents to Christianity so also is the suppression and boycott of men and papers to-day, so is the falsification of history to suit Church claims. In fact, there is hardly any evil one can name that has not had religious justification. We are not here concerned with whether the people who did these things understood religion rightly or wrongly, we are merely stating the historic fact that in the name of religion these things were done, and they were done because, rightly or wrongly, those who did them thought they had religious justification for their conduct.

Apropos of our recent articles on Paine's *Age of Reason*, a friend reminds us of some comments by Lenin,

written in 1922, concerning the value of the earlier writings on Freethought. Looking up the passage we find it well worth citing. Here it is:—

Engels long ago advised the leaders of the modern proletariat to translate the militant Atheist literature of the end of the eighteenth century for mass distribution among the people. To our shame we have not yet done this. . . . Sometimes our sluggishness, indolence, and inability in this sphere is excused by all kinds of bombastic arguments, as for example, that the old Atheist literature of the eighteenth century is obsolete, unscientific, naïve, etc. There is nothing worse in the world than these pseudo-scientific sophisms. . . . Certainly there is much that is unscientific in the Atheist works of revolutionary Atheists of the eighteenth century. . . . A Marxist could not make a worse mistake than to think that the many millions of people who are condemned by modern society to ignorance, illiteracy and prejudices can extricate themselves from this ignorance only by following the straight line of purely Marxist education. . . . The lively, talented writings of the old Atheists of the eighteenth century, which attacked skilfully and openly the clericalism prevailing in their day, will prove very often to be a thousand times more suitable for arousing people from their slumber than the dull dry paraphrasing of Marxism. . . . which (to be frank) frequently distorts Marxism. . . . The most important thing. . . is to be able to rouse the as yet undeveloped masses into taking an intelligent interest in the religious question and in the criticism of religion.

The trouble is, in this country, that so many so-called advanced workers in the field of social reform, not merely refrain from a direct criticism of religion, but preach their reforms in the name of a "pure Christianity," or a "true religion." It is not surprising that these people receive so many pats on the shoulders from the leaders of the Churches. They really do know their best friends when they see them.

Of course the evolutionary and anthropological attack on religion could not be made in the eighteenth century; but it was often implied, and occasionally more than implied. But the main principles of the criticism of Christianity were well stated during the eighteenth century. And the leaders of Christianity, in the very act of adopting (perforce) the statements of the Freethinkers never forgot to proclaim that these Freethinkers were not "scholars," that they were "coarse" and "brutal," etc. All more or less lies, but quite sufficient to frighten those timid and respectable people who, to shield themselves, joined in the falsehoods, and sought shelter under the name of some modern heretic who had travelled along the road of Freethought, only so far as the earlier Freethinkers had made it safe for him.

Nothing would please us better than to reprint some of these earlier Freethought writings, and if any of our wealthier readers are willing to provide the funds, we are quite willing to see to the work of preparation. It was only by this means that the *Age of Reason* was republished at a "give-away" price. But it is doing its work well.

The North-West Federation of Branches Inaugural Conference is to be held in No. 9 Room, Hesketh Buildings, Ormskirk Road, Preston, at 1 p.m., on Sunday, August 22. Tea to be served at 5 p.m. in adjoining room. Members of Preston, Blackburn, Bolton, Burnley, Manchester, Birkenhead, Liverpool and Chester Branches will be taking part, and all are invited. Will unattached Freethinkers in other Lancashire and Cheshire Towns, as also further North, kindly accept this notice as invitation. Further particulars from John V. Shortt, 24 Warmington Road, Knotty Ash, Liverpool.

Blackburn Branch N.S.S. will be busy this week in cooperation with Mr. G. Whitehead, who will lecture to-day (August 22), and each evening during the week. The local saints will no doubt make the visit well known and take full advantage of the increased interest aroused.

Problems of Chronology

II.

OF course, it is one thing for the *Catholic Encyclopedia* to throw overboard the Bible date for creation—4004 B.C.—and quite another thing for individual Catholics to do so. I find, on looking through Catholic literature, that the Pentateuch is taught as divinely true by numberless Catholics and believed in by millions. Only when a Catholic is faced by science does he hastily run to his *Encyclopedia* to show that Catholics can—on some things—follow science. Even on such a controversial question among religious people as Evolution, though Catholics jump with joy when an argument can be produced against it, I was actually told by a well-known priest that the Church does not oppose its members being thorough-going Evolutionists. Whether the priest would say the same before his sheep-like flock is another question.

There are no real "eras" in the Old Testament. Everything in that famous work, so far as chronology is concerned, is in a state of hopeless confusion and muddle. The older the books, the more the chaos. The *Encyclopedia Biblica*, which devotes considerable space to the whole question, claims that even as late as the production of the Septuagint, there was no clear idea how the early history of Israel could be measured. Indeed, the numbering seems to have come into being with what is known as the Priestly Code—that is, the editing, or re-writing up of ancient documents, or even inventing, in favour of the Priesthood—about the fifth century B.C. That a good deal of the dating in the Bible is founded on "magic" numbers must be apparent to anybody who studies the question. Whole eras are built up on forties, or sevens, or seventies.

Compare, for example, the way in which the building of Solomon's temple is made to take place 480 years after the exodus. This, says the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, "bears the clear impress of being artificial, for it plainly counts from Moses to David twelve generations of forty years, each of which we can easily identify as follows: Moses, Joshua, Othniel, Ehud, Deborah, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson, Eli, Samuel, Saul, and David." But when it comes to fitting some of the dates given in Judges and Samuel into the number 480, the task is found quite impossible; and Bible chronologists have to admit that accurate datings are quite unattainable.

"It is much harder," says the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, "to deal with the chronological dates for the period, from the building of the temple by Solomon to the conquest of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar." And one soon finds that the "much harder" can be applied to almost all the chronology. As the Rev. Dr. Giles, in his *Hebrew Records*, puts it, "the whole subject of Bible chronology is hopelessly obscure."

Considering that so much of Hebrew history is, according to such an eminent Egyptologist as Dr. Yahuda, entwined with that of Egypt, one would think that Egyptian chronology would help us. Alas, here it is also according to the *Encyclopedia Biblica* "too obscure and uncertain." Nor "have the monuments fulfilled the expectation that by the help of inscriptions giving dates, it would be possible, by calculation, to reach a more exact chronology for Egyptian history." If even Egyptian historical dates are in a state of chaos, it can hardly be expected that any help for Jewish history can be derived therefrom. As a matter of fact the earlier Old Testament times get no help whatever from Egyptian chronology.

From Assyriology some help seems to have come, though here again authorities are at variance. At all

events, it is a fact that the defeat of Ahab, King of Israel, by Shalmaneser II. in the ninth century B.C. is not mentioned in the Old Testament; and thus a good common date to both the Assyrians and the Jews is of no use for the purpose of reckoning. And it is also a surprising fact that authorities differ as to the date of Solomon. His death may have taken place 930 B.C., or it may have been 950 B.C. You can always take your choice on Biblical matters and still remain orthodox. Uncertainty in chronology, although vouched for by revelation, is no bar to a permanent abode in heaven.

It would be tedious to go carefully through the Old Testament for "cardinal" dates, particularly when these cardinal dates are so uncertain that authorities are at their wits' end to reconcile them with "secular" history—when the dates of secular history are known, that is. Most of these dates also are in a state of chaos. Certainly little can be claimed as either authoritative or final before about 586 B.C., after that some authorities are content with the "Canon of Ptolemy" as an "assured framework."

But the difficulties which beset the believer in the Old Testament are renewed as soon as he comes to New Testament chronology. "The task," says the *Encyclopedia Biblica*, "is beset with serious difficulty." The reasons for this are quite simple. It seems that the first Christians had no interest in chronology; and "the historical traditions of the Christians were formed wholly with the purpose of promoting Christian piety." Moreover, "of at least a part of the traditions the historical trustworthiness is subject to such grave doubt that we can venture to use them only with great reserve, if at all." This is a particularly reassuring confession to come from such an expert as Professor Von Soden, is it not?

The truth really is that there never was a genuine chronology of Jesus, any more than there is of Abraham. It was not the stupidity of the early Christians in not carefully putting into their "biography" the necessary dates. They were making up a "divine" history where dates are unnecessary—as they are in the stories of Jupiter, Adonis, or Venus. To say that "tradition," as a mere tale of years, had no interest for the early Christians, is simply framing an excuse which may be true or not, but which remains merely an excuse. Had the biography of Jesus been a genuine one, the datings would have been easily fixed. The date given by Luke—the census under Cyrenius or Quirinius in 7 A.D.—has given rise to an interminable discussion which is not yet settled. And we must never forget that Irenæus, who lived nearer the age of Jesus than do modern critics, threw overboard the supposed date of the crucifixion—somewhere between 26 A.D. and 36 A.D. He claimed that Jesus was at least 50 years old when he died; and in the passage referring to this, he does not say that Jesus was crucified under Pontius Pilate, but that he just died.

The chronology of the book of Acts is as hopelessly muddled as anything else in the Bible. It is quite amusing to find how writers on Paul and his missionary travels, and his imprisonments by the Romans, try to reconcile Acts with the Epistles. One can be sure that if Acts says one thing, it will be contradicted in the Epistles. There are any number of these contradictions, one of the most famous being that in the Epistles Paul claims to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. In Acts, however, almost from the beginning to the end of his ministry, he was preaching to the Jews. When Paul died, or when Peter died—if either ever lived, for it is by no means certain—is quite unknown. Chronology in early Christian history is just a mass of uncertainty, the dates taken mostly from Eusebius, an

authority of hopeless fallibility, who on his own showing was ready to lie for the glory of the Lord.

Yet all this matter of dubious history, stupid miracles, and incomprehensible religion is put forward by a powerful Church as divine. What a failure is man's boasted intelligence!

H. CUTNER.

Russia's Perennial Problem

Russia, like every other State, is primarily dependent upon the products of its soil. In a vast territory comprising one sixth of the globe's solid surface, whose population is pre-eminently rural, this verity is all important. Consequently, the attention of Russia's rulers is ever directed to the various problems relating to agrarian economy.

Until recently, Russia remained probably the least developed agricultural area in Europe. In their recent pronouncement: *Soviet Communism*, 2 Vols., Longmans, Sidney and Beatrice Webb stress this truth when they note: "Whether as the result of nature or nurture; of climate or of race; of centuries of oppression and illiteracy; or of generations of slavery and peonage; or of a religion which imposed no code of conduct and amounted to little more than propitiatory rites, the typical mujik—when not under coercion by landlord, taxgatherer, usurer or employer—failed to grow enough food, taking good years with bad, even to maintain his own family in full health and strength."

But the Russian peasant laboured under many disadvantages. His holdings were inadequate, and ever tended to shrink, while his arable strips were frequently far apart and his implements were extremely primitive. It is estimated that the soil of at least one-third of the holdings was turned with a digging-stick, while one-fourth boasted neither ox nor horse to draw a plough. Manure was scarce, and artificial fertilizers practically unknown, while weeds incommoded the crops. Corn was threshed with a rude flail, and was cut with a simple sickle. Marketing was nearly confined to the occasional call of the grain-dealer. So recently as 1900, the mass of the peasant cultivators were 500 years behind the times.

Poor harvests constantly recurred. From 1800 to 1854 the crops failed in 35 seasons. Again, we gather that: "In the 20 years, 1891-1910, there were only four bountiful harvests, with 13 poor harvests and two famine years." The more substantial peasants, the Kulaks and landed proprietors who farmed extensive estates on more scientific principles fared better, and even when impecunious peasants went hungry, grain was usually available to the urban community, while there was often a surplus for export abroad. Little wonder, then, that long before the Bolshevik Revolution, the rustics occasionally revolted against the exactions of greedy landlords, pillaged and destroyed their mansions, and took temporary possession of their domains.

Extensive territories were devastated during the Civil conflicts that raged in Russia at the termination of the World War. The forced requisition of food supplies and the ravages of the contending armies induced the peasants to limit production and to conceal provender for their own consumption. The consequent scarcity was so serious that Lenin was compelled to initiate his New Economic Policy in 1921. This permitted a slight restoration of private enterprise, while prices were once more determined by demand and supply. Thus the more opulent peasants were encouraged to market their hidden grain. But the dis-

astrous Civil commotions, intensified as they were by climatal inclemencies led to the terrible famine of 1921. Moreover, Lenin's concessions caused adverse reactions in rustic circles. The peasants in general had supported the Bolsheviki in their struggle for supremacy, as the overthrow of the Provisional Government allowed them to slay or expel the landowners and seize their estates, which they appropriated to themselves. Very generally, also, the rural population had favoured the Red Armies as the Whites had declared their intention to restore to the landowners their confiscated property.

But the peasantry retained possession of the soil; yet they resented all Governmental claims either in the form of food supplies to the cities or in taxes. A long servile peasantry had risen in rebellion. The wealthier and more progressive farmers, the Kulaks, prospered, but the poorer cultivators became sullen, discontented and sometimes turbulent.

The agrarian situation bristled with difficulties and innumerable experiments were undertaken to ease it. Voluntary co-operative societies of agriculturists, some 80,000 in number existed in 1927, but these were now superseded by collective farms on which a greatly increased production was projected, whose profits were to be distributed on a copartnership basis. These farms, which were seemingly spontaneous, assumed several forms and some appeared strikingly successful. Others, however, made little progress, and so far there was a poor prospect of permanent security against shortage. So the authorities decided that voluntary husbandry must be replaced by State initiative and control. Yet, as the Webbs testify, "the State farms (sovkhosi), which the Soviet Government had managed to retain in its own administration, and had been for nearly a decade struggling to cultivate exclusively with wage labourers, had so far failed to produce, after their staffs had been fed, even in good years, more than a small net addition to the aggregate of marketable grain."

Economic insecurity aroused wide differences of opinion concerning remedial measures which were freely expressed, both in publications and the discussions of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. Trotsky denounced the more prosperous peasantry who employed labour as renegades who were restoring Capitalism and reversing the triumphs of the Revolution. Their drastic repression was demanded, but no practical suggestion for the augmentation of foodstuffs emerged. Some advocated the increase of State farms, but no one demonstrated that this would solve the difficulty. Bukharin and Rykov were wiser and recommended compromise. State arrangements, they argued, needed time for fruition, and it was unreasonable to expect any immediate improvement on the small holdings. It was therefore urged that "only the more energetic and enlightened peasants" at the moment in possession of comparatively large holdings, requisite machinery, with modern methods of cultivation, were in a position to make any substantial contribution to the increased output so urgently needed.

Despite their sins the Kulaks must be encouraged and assisted to increase their undertakings as the only available help towards national security, even if the more poverty-stricken peasants were temporarily reduced to the status of paid labourers.

Collective farms under Soviet supervision began to be established on an extensive scale in 1928. On these the peasants were invited to combine, and the State promised a supply of modern agricultural machinery. Heavier imposts were to be levied on the Kulaks; they were denied the advantages of the new appliances, and were severely incommoded with the view to their entire extinction. The average peasant

was speciously persuaded or intimidated into participation in the new scheme. The Kulaks, Ukrainians and Don Cossacks suffered, but the collective farms proved fairly successful.

In less than a decade great changes occurred, and these were so rapid that they embarrassed the Government, which was unable to redeem its pledges. The larger number of the recently instituted farms had not received their promised tractors, while the peasants who had augmented production (many of whom had joined the State farms with reluctance) complained that their surplus had been confiscated by the Soviet agents who were acting in the interests of the urban community. Peasants who owned livestock, and who cherished a grievance, as the Webbs relate, "in many instances slaughtered, in 1929-30, their cattle and horses, sheep and pigs, rather than bring them into the common stock. So widespread was the outcry that the central committees were driven to instruct Stalin to issue his manifesto entitled 'Dizzy with Success,' in which the zeal of the Government agents was rebuked; the voluntary character of the collectives was emphasized; permission to withdraw was conceded; and proper consideration of the varying stock brought in by different members was insisted on. Nevertheless the animals continued to be slaughtered, and the total membership to fall off."

In 1931-32 the harvests were very poor and discontent spread. There was serious trouble in the Ukraine, where the sullen antagonism of the people caused the failure of the corn-storing plan, both in 1931 and 1932, and destitution stalked the country. Arable areas of wide extent were not sown and, even at harvest-time, where cereals had been planted, 20 or even 50 per cent of the grain stood neglected in the fields, which was "either not collected at all or was ruined in the threshing." This we learn from Isaac Mazeppa who was Premier of the Ukrainian Republic in 1919.

Towards the close of 1932, Russia was menaced with a far-flung famine, but Stalin's bold and energetic policy which was prosecuted on a widely reaching scale, very substantially assisted as it was by excellent harvests in 1933-34, saved the situation for the time being. Without doubt, enormous improvements have been made, although the Webbs imply that the collective farm system is still on trial. Indeed, many unprejudiced observers question whether Russia has really mastered the food problem, which remains exasperating in its complexity. Somewhat mournfully our Fabian friends conclude that: "Whatever may be done by drastic administration to compel the sullen farmers to cultivate effectively, this will not restore the slaughtered horses, cattle, sheep and pigs."

The ingrained antagonism of the peasant to reform is everywhere proverbial. When the head of the Russian family is asked to abdicate his hereditary standing his resentment is perfectly natural. Other ancient customs are highly tenacious of life. Still, if the younger generation accept the changed conditions the new system may endure. Maurice Hindus is selected as a publicist, whose closely intimate knowledge of the Russian peasant is second to none. Hindus believes that even if the Soviet system crumbles, husbandry will still remain collectivized under peasant control and he thinks that: "Collectivization has within it the power to convert Russia from a backward into a progressive agricultural nation, as individual landholding with its inevitable small acreage never can."

This pronouncement appears very rational, although other careful observers either reserve judgment or manifest grave misgivings.

T. F. PALMER

God's Mercy

A STORY FOR CHILDREN

"All things bright and beautiful,
All creatures great and small,
All things wise and wonderful,
The Lord God made them all.

He gave us eyes to see them,
And lips that we might tell,
How great is God Almighty,
Who has made all things well."

No doubt most of you boys and girls have sung this hymn quite often in Sunday-school, or at day-school before your morning lessons began. But I wonder if you have thought about the words at all. And I wonder still more what you will think about them after you have read the true story which I am now going to tell you.

Once upon a time—in fact it was in the month of June of this very year 1937—there was a young lady (whom we will call Betty for short) who lived in a sweet little cottage in the heart of the country. This cottage was very old, having been built when King Charles I. was on the throne, and there were a lot of oak beams in the ceilings and walls, some of which probably came out of the wooden battleships which were used in the Navy at that time. All around the cottage there were woods and fields, and at the bottom of the orchard there ran a little stream.

Now Betty was not a bit interested in dolls and toys because she found it much more amusing and exciting to watch the doings of real live animals. She was specially fond of birds, which she used to feed with crumbs in the winter; while in the summer she used to wander round the garden, peeping into the hedges and bushes and trees, looking for signs of bird life. Every year, in spring-time, she would carefully note where the new nests were, and she would watch for the first eggs to be laid.

Betty was very kind-hearted, and she would not dream of stealing the eggs, like some stupid little boys do. She much preferred to watch them hatch out one by one, and to see the little birds grow up and then leave their nests when they were fully grown.

One day, as she was walking along a privet hedge, she saw a thrush fly out. When she looked into the hedge, there, sure enough, was a nest with three baby thrushes and one egg. The baby birds were only a day or two old and were not very pretty to look at. No feathers had grown on their bodies, and they looked just like tiny chicks which had been plucked. Even their eyes were not yet open, though you could plainly see where they were through their closed eyelids.

For the next three days Betty did not go near the nest. She was afraid that if she came too often to look at the babies, she might frighten the mother-thrush away altogether. Then the poor little things would die for want of food, because no other grown-up thrush would bother to feed them. So she waited patiently until the fourth day before she had her second peep at the thrushes home. By this time the egg had been hatched and there were now four little thrushes.

For the next couple of weeks Betty was unable to visit the nest again, but when she next looked to see how the thrush family was getting on, she was surprised to find that there were only two babies at home. What could have happened to the other two? They were still much too young to be able to fly away of their own accord. Perhaps they might have tumbled out of the nest, thought Betty. So she looked care-

fully on the ground all around underneath the nest, but she could find no trace of them at all.

It was all very mysterious and rather disappointing. But Betty was glad that at least two of the four baby thrushes were alive and well. She made up her mind to find out, if she could, how the other two little birds had left the nest. So every morning now she would wait until she saw the mother-bird fly off to get a nice juicy worm for their breakfast, and then she would go quietly up to the nest and have a look at them. They were not in the least afraid of her, and would just sit up and open their big yellow beaks, because they thought that the rustling of the leaves was their own mother coming back with a tit-bit. She became so fond of them that she gave them each a name. She pretended that they were brother and sister, and called them Peter and Paula.

Well; one hot afternoon Betty was very busy in the garden, weeding the flower-beds, cutting off the dead roses, and doing all the little jobs which have to be done in a garden to keep it tidy. She was getting very thirsty and was beginning to think about having a cup of tea when she heard a noise which made her look up from her work. A couple of birds were fluttering about, uttering cries of distress, and following after a bigger bird. To Betty's alarm she recognized the two birds as thrushes, and the bigger bird was a brightly-coloured jay, which flew out of the hedge where Peter and Paula's nest was. The jay then settled on the branch of a nearby oak tree, and Betty saw quite clearly that it had a little baby bird dangling from its beak.

Although the two thrushes continued to flutter round the jay, making loud chirps and squeaks of distress, the jay took no notice of them. He simply took the baby-bird in his claws and began to peck and peck at it with his strong beak. Betty was furious with him and rushed up to the oak tree, waving her hands and shouting, "You cruel bird! How dare you kill those little birds." But the jay only flew off with his prey and settled in a field on the other side of the stream, and there he ate the baby bird up.

Quickly Betty went back to the privet hedge to see if Peter and Paula were still safe. But, alas! there was only little Paula left. Peter had disappeared, and Betty was quite certain that it was the jay who had killed him.

Feeling very upset, Betty tried to think of all the ways she could to protect Paula from the jay. She thought of putting a net over the nest, or of fixing up a paper windmill to frighten the jay. But she knew that whatever she did, it might quite as easily frighten Paula's mother and father away. Then Paula would only be left to starve. In the end, she decided that nothing could be done. So, when she went to bed that night, Betty could hardly sleep for anxiety. She only hoped that the jay would not remember there was still one more little bird left in the nest he had robbed.

Next morning Betty got up very early, and without waiting to have her breakfast, she went over to the privet hedge to take a peep at Paula. But when she got there, the nest was empty! No mother or father thrush flew backwards and forwards with tasty little morsels for their chicks. No little squeaks came from four hungry baby mouths waiting to be fed. It was clear that the thief had again visited the nest and robbed the thrushes of their last baby. The loving care which the two parents had spent on their babies was all in vain. Nothing now was left of a happy bird-home but the deserted nest. Betty went back to her breakfast in tears.

Now, I wonder if any of you boys and girls who have read this story (which is absolutely true), can ex-

plain why God should have allowed such a horrible thing to happen.

Even if some of you do not think it was very horrible, can you explain why God should make bigger birds to eat smaller birds, when he could so easily have made them all like thrushes, who only eat grubs and caterpillars. Or, better still, why couldn't God have made them all to eat leaves and grass and seeds, instead of making them feed on other living creatures?

The Bible says that God made everything. It also says that God is merciful. Would you think God merciful if he had made big giants who could eat you up alive? The mother and father thrush had taken a lot of trouble and care to make their nest and to feed their babies. Then before the babies were fully grown, God allowed the jay to snatch them all away. Not only did he allow this, but he also allowed the mother and father thrush to be made unhappy by seeing their babies killed in front of their very eyes. Can you really believe that what the hymn says is true? I don't. I say that it is all untrue, and that all these stories about God are just fairy-tales. When you grow older, you will find out that angels and devils, spirits and Gods, are all as unreal as the fairies and elves which you read about in your story-books.

BEATRICE FRASER.

Thanking Heaven

RECENTLY, Doctor Frank Buchman, leader of the Oxford Group Movement, said:—

I thank Heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler, who has built a Front Line Defence against the anti-Christ of Communism.

Well Heaven has been thanked for many things, but this is one of the funniest I have ever heard about, probably only equalled by what Mr. Ward Price, one of the regular staff of the *Daily Mail*, writing in that paper comparing Stalin and Hitler on September 2, 1936, said:—

Like Lucifer before the Fall, Stalin may mobilize the power of darkness; but the German Michael is also fast preparing to take the field.

Punch is supposed to be our leading humorous journal, but the *Daily Mail* threatens to outdo it. *Punch*, however, is sometimes funny; whereas in politics, the *Daily Mail* is a childish *Comic Cuts*.

This admiration for Mr. Hitler is not, however, shared by Christ's vicar on earth—the Pope: it is not the first time that Christians have disagreed and nobody has yet read of the Pope's thanking Heaven for having put dear Adolf on the earth.

Let us analyse Doctor Buchman's statement from the writings of Hitler himself—Hitler as a crusader for Christ is really too funny! When one thinks of the number of priests in concentration camps, Jew-baiting, the abolition of the vote, the smashing of the Trade Unions and the suppression of free speech and free press, it is an absolute farce. I suppose our reactionaries would even have a kind word to say concerning the Aryan God that Germany has installed. We should probably be told that the Reds did not believe in God, and that any old God, Aryan or otherwise, was better than none.

But it is not alone Doctor Frank Buchman's opinion: we also read in the Tory Press that Hitler is a man of strict morals, a teetotaller, non-smoker, passionate lover of children, and a lover of flowers (especially in concentration camps).

It may be true that Hitler is a man of simple habits: even many criminals are men who are known to have kindly instincts—so we will just examine some of the utterances of this lover of flowers and children, taken

from his own book *Mein Kampf*.

Hitler says :—

An alliance whose purpose does not comprise the intention of making war, is senseless and worthless. . . . We must throw ourselves into a final and decisive fight with France . . . on condition that the annihilation of France be looked upon solely as a means of finally gaining the chance of expansion for our people.

It is this Frankenstein who deliberately talks of annihilating a nation of 40,000,000 people in the same way as one would mention swotting a fly; this plotter of colossal mass slaughter, who is also the gentleman of a kindly simple nature.

In the same book he openly proclaims his intention of attacking Russia and annexing large tracts of her territory. When the Russians, knowing these things, prepared to meet force with force, our press tells us that Russia is preparing a huge army and an enormous air force. Well, naturally she is! The Russians are not fools, and they are not going to share the fate of a defenceless Abyssinia against an armed Fascist force.

In a world that is rapidly losing its sense of humour, Doctor Frank Buchman and his friends are doing a useful work in making those of us who are still sane, smile. This American gentleman, who is called Frank by all his followers, and possesses rather a benign Pickwickian appearance, is a pioneer of the Get-back-to-God Movement and open confessions, which latter are concerned with the most trivial and stupid happenings.

A successful draper tells us that he found Christ suddenly at one of their meetings. It has altered the whole course of Mr. Beverley Nichols' life and his (never at any time very profound) thinking. It claims to sublimate sex; and men stand up and confess such things as that on one occasion when stopping at an hotel, they looked with a carnal eye upon a waitress, and now triumphantly proclaim that even a gathering of 6,000 of the Women's Health and Beauty League, dressed in abbreviated but attractive costumes, leaves them calm and unmoved.

Except for the fact that most of these confessions are couched in more correct English, there is practically no difference between these recitals of sin and the outpourings of the converted coster of the Salvation Army, who tells us that before he joined the "Harmy," and found Christ, he used to get drunk and beat his wife every Saturday; but that now his whole nature is so changed that he never even protests when she comes home and tries to belt Hell out of him.

Christianity must be in a pretty poor state when the Lord is thanked for sending us plagues equal to those with which he is supposed to have visited the Egyptians.

Thank Heaven for Hitler, and the Oxford Group Movement, and the Salvation Army, and Doctor Buchman! Poor Heaven!

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

Correspondence

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—There is nothing of importance to say about your leader in the *Freethinker* for August 8, for the simple reason that it speaks for itself in so cogent a manner, that criticism of any value would have to live up to a high literary standard.

One remark, however, if you have space for it, I should like to make. O. W. Holmes is ignored or contemned by the present "superior" generation, especially the younger highbrows. I was delighted to notice your graceful allusion to this most lovable man who, had he been alive to-day, would undoubtedly have been one of us. His "date" allowed for, he seems to me head and shoulders above similar writers to-day.

G. TODHUNTER.

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.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Kingston Market) : Saturday and Sunday, 7.0, A Lecture. Literature for sale.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Highbury Corner) : 8.0, Saturday, Mr. L. Ebury. White Stone Pond, Hampstead, 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury.

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Rushcroft Road, near Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. L. Ebury. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, Mr. F. P. Corrigan.

WEST HAM BRANCH N.S.S.—Outing to Kingston. Train leaves Waterloo 10.20. All Freethinkers invited to join.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Evans. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Leacy, Connell, Tuson and Miss Millard. Wednesday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant, Tuson and Miss E. Millard. Thursday, 7.30, Messrs. Saphin, Bryant and Tuson. Friday, 7.30, Messrs. Barnes, Perry and others. The *Freethinker*, *Age of Reason* and Mr. Chapman Cohen's latest pamphlets on sale outside Marble Arch Tube Station every evening.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (No. 9 Room, Hesketh Buildings, Ormskirk Road) : 1.0, Conference of North Western Branches. Evening Demonstration on Market Square.

OUTDOOR

BLYTH (The Fountain) : Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

BURNLEY MARKET : 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

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

CHORLEY (Market) : 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

HIGHAM : 7.30, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths) : 8.0, Sunday, Messrs. Parry and Morris. Corner of High Park Street and Park Road, or near vicinity, 8.0, Thursday, Messrs. Jackson and Thompson.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Park Gates) : 8.0, Saturday, W. A. Atkinson.

MIDDLESBROUGH (The Crescent) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NELSON (Chapel Street) : 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton.

NORTH ORMESBY (Market) : 7.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

PRESTON (Market) : 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. V. Shortt.

SOUTH SHIELDS (The Pier Head) : 7.30, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

GOD AND THE UNIVERSE

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

With a Reply by Professor A. S. Eddington

SECOND EDITION

Paper 2s. Postage 2d.

Cloth 3s. Postage 3d.

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CHURCH

WHAT IS RELIGION ?

By

COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL

Price 1d. each.

Postage ½d.

A list of Ingersoll's pamphlets published by
The Pioneer Press

<i>About the Holy Bible</i>	- - -	3d.
<i>Oration on Thomas Paine</i>	- - -	2d.
<i>Household of Faith</i>	- - -	1d.
<i>Mistakes of Moses</i>	- - -	2d.
<i>Rome or Reason?</i>	- - -	3d.
<i>The Christian Religion</i>	- - -	2d.
<i>What is it Worth?</i>	- - -	1d.

The above will be sent post free 1s. 6d.

HUMANITY AND WAR

By

CHAPMAN COHEN

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

Send at once for a Supply

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

The Secular Society Ltd.,

CHAIRMAN: CHAPMAN COHEN

Company Limited by Guarantee.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Christianity, Slavery and Labour

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

Cloth 2s. 6d.

Postage 3d.

A Great Naturalist and Freethinker

A Naturalist & Immortality

An Essay on W. H. Hudson, by

C-de-B

With artistic cover design

Price 2s.

Postage 2d.

The Book That Shook The Churches

The Age Of Reason

THOMAS PAINE

With Critical Introduction by CHAPMAN COHEN

For more than Thirty Years Men and Women went to prison to vindicate the right to
publish and circulate this book

This is a complete edition of Paine's immortal work, and covers, with introduction (44 pages), 250 pages of close type, well printed on good paper with portrait cover. Price 4d., postage 2½d., or strongly bound in cloth with portrait on plate paper, 1s. 6d., postage 3d.

This is the cheapest work ever published in the history of the Freethought Movement. No other book ever shook the Churches so thoroughly, and its wide circulation to-day will repeat the effect it produced more than a century ago. It is simple enough for a child and profound enough for a philosopher. Paine's book appealed to the people in 1794; it appeals to the public to-day.

To Help the Best Cause

"*The Churches and Modern Thought* has probably made more converts to Freethought than any other book except Thomas Paine's *Age of Reason*. . . . One chapter of the famous work, printed in bold type and covering over a hundred pages, is now being issued in revised and extended form under the title **CONCERNING PROGRESSIVE REVELATION.**" — *Literary Guide*, November, 1936.

Inviting in its print, its brevity, its clarity, and its price, and packed with information practically unknown to and well calculated to startle the average man, this little book is ideal as a mind-opener for the million, and withal singularly convincing.

OF ALL BOOKSELLERS
at the nominal price of 1s. net.

A New Propagandist Series
by CHAPMAN COHEN

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE

- No. 1. Did Jesus Christ Exist?
2. Morality Without God
3. What is the Use of Prayer?
4. Christianity and Woman
5. Must we Have a Religion?
6. The Devil
7. What is Freethought?
8. Gods and Their Makers

OTHERS IN PREPARATION

Each Pamphlet contains Sixteen Pages

Price 1d.

Postage ½d.