YET WE HAVE NO CENSOR

THE FREETHINKER

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PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

Views and Opinions

Yet we have no Censor

WE have no censorship in this country—that is, no official censorship, bar one. This is a censorship of stage plays. The persons appointed to this post need know nothing of the drama, or of literature, or of history; he need not have an appreciation of sociology, and as for science—who is he that he shall know such a thing? Most of those who hold this post of censor would be more at home on a racecourse than in a library, and would probably count "Jimmy" Douglas as a man of letters, the Bishop of London as a profound philosopher, and if faced with a choice (the reader will pardon the mix-up of dates and occasions) between two unknown plays such as *Hamlet* and *East Lynne*, would unhesitatingly reject the first named. As Joseph Conrad said of this functionary and of his qualifications for office, "He must have done nothing, he must have imagined nothing. He must be obscure, insignificant and mediocre—in thought, in act, in speech, and sympathy. He must know nothing of life, of art—and of himself. For if he did he would not dare to be what he is." We need only add that very few people appear to know who he is or why he exists. Judging from his actions his main purpose appears to be to see that the Royal family—for several generations back—are treated with respect, to permit a suggestiveness of speech on the stage that is more lascivious than the plainest language, to allow a paucity of clothing that is more sexually irritating than would be complete nudity, and to help identify in the public mind a bedroom scene as an unmistakable symbol of sexual irregularities.

Apart from this mixture of a sixteenth century clown and a medieval Inquisitor we have no official censor in this country. We have a film censorship, but this is a kind of trade agreement and has no legal power. This censorship, however, tries to copy its brother in office, and recently tried hard to prevent children seeing "The Seven Dwarfs" unless accompanied by an adult, on the ground that the sight of an old woman being turned into a witch might frighten them. (A committee that believes children will think less or differently because they have adults with them deserves mentioning). But I expect none of the film board would object to children listening to a priest telling them about Hell, or protest against their being watched by an ogre in the sky called God.

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Still we have no Censor

But we have no censor of the press, or of publication, or of speech. Why should we have one, when we have customs that are more slimy in their workings, more dishonest in their plans, and quite effective? There is the B.B.C. We know that every speech, with rare exceptions, must be submitted to the ridiculous figures that rule "the air." We know that when we are invited to listen to a casual conversation in the street that this has been carefully prepared; that in a broadcast conversation, the spontaneous answers have been prepared to answer arranged questions, and that if any speaker dares to depart from his approved and doctored script he is immediately "faded out." But, thank God, we have no censorship in this country.

Still, what can be done is done. For example, the other day a discussion between two Labour Members of Parliament—Mr. J. C. Wedgwood and Dr. Salter—was arranged by the B.B.C. The two debaters wrote their speeches and submitted them to the enlightened judges at the B.B.C. At the last moment Mr. Wedgwood's manuscript was returned with references to Hitler and Mussolini deleted, and also some references—laudatory—of the part played by England in defending the Protestants of Holland and Ireland against oppression. There was also an objection to remarks concerning the probable conduct of Hitler and Mussolini. Mr. Wedgwood refused to agree to the deletions, and so the debate was "off." Mr. Wedgwood also says that the B.B.C. lied to the *Daily Telegraph* over the matter, and no one who appreciates the fakes and the lies previously told by the B.B.C. will hesitate to take Mr. Wedgwood's word on this point. Mr. Wedgwood also says that he refuses to submit to censorship. This heroic gesture is late. Mr. Wedgwood consented to the censorship when he submitted his manuscript to the salaried nonentities who control the B.B.C. And until public men summon up enough self-respect to refuse to submit their speeches, and so become associated in a fraud upon the public, the game will go on. After all, one can pay too high a price for the patronage of Sir John Reith.

The matter becomes really laughable when one hears that the subject under discussion was "War and Peace in Europe." Could anyone discuss that subject at the present time without reference to Mussolini and Hitler? Could one talk about war and peace in Europe without at least referring to the value

of the word of two such sensitive and honourable gentlemen as Hitler and Mussolini. True, we have it on the highest authority that Mussolini has always insisted on the purest of castor oil being given to those who deserved his attention, and Hitler will have none but the highest quality rubber used on women and old men. Sir John Reith may perhaps suggest to Mr. Chamberlain that in future his policy should be adopted and members only allowed to speak in the House when their manuscripts have gained the approval of the Cabinet. It is good to think that we have no censorship in this country.

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Why should we have a Censor?

But there is the incident of Mr. Eden. I speak as a child in these things, but to me it appears quite plain that Mr. Eden has not said all he might have said with regard to his resignation. And being child-like I also believe that Mr. Chamberlain has not told *all* the truth in this matter. I cannot think that these conversations between Governments are settled in this easy-going, " I say, old man let us have a chat about things " kind of way. I have some recollection of reading that a formal invitation to confer follows a devil-of-a-lot of negotiations, and that these talks are arranged on a pre-designed plan. Mr. Eden says that the letter of invitation was a threat, it was in the nature of an ultimatum. Mr. Chamberlain says it was not. Well there is an easy way to settle the matter. There is no need to retail all the chit-chat, the backstairs talks, the family manœuvrings; for the final invitation which Mr. Chamberlain accepted, *on behalf of the people of England,* is in the nature of a public document; and the people—you and I and all others, even to the baby in arms—are committed to the consequences of that invitation. It is just copying the B.B.C. standard of truth to say that the country is not committed by an acceptance of the invitation, and no one believes that there was not something in the invitation that Mr. Chamberlain is not wishful the public should know.

Mr. Chamberlain refuses to publish the letter. Mr. Eden, who has at least a shrewd idea of the contents of the letter—if he has no more substantial information—refuses to say more. Why does Mr. Eden refuse to speak? There can only be one of two reasons. One is fear of completely wrecking his future career —those in high places may, if he speaks out, be trusted to secure that. The other reason is a feeling of loyalty to the Cabinet. I believe it is a question of conflicting loyalties. Mr. Eden does not trust Mussolini's word. Neither does anyone else. But having said so much Mr. Eden leaves the democracy of the country with nothing else to go on but his bare word. If the situation was serious enough for Mr. Eden to give up his post, it should be serious enough for him to take the public into his confidence. There is really in this case a loyalty that is greater than loyalty to a leader. There is the loyalty to that huge half-articulate public who, whatever happens amiss, will suffer and bleed and die and pay, and who will pay for war in wrecked homes and maimed bodies and tortured minds. It is this that calls for the higher loyalty. It is the people to whom the first loyalty should be shown. If this larger loyalty were practised, political life would be much cleaner than it is, and so might attract a higher type of character to its service. But a censorship that is established in practice, and in the name of the highest morality, may well manage without its being established by written law.

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A Censor is Un-English

We lift our heads and proudly proclaim that there is no censorship in this country. Our letters are opened in the post office, but only in the interest of the public. Our telephone conversations are " tapped," but not by way of censorship. Consider only one further point— there are many more. In the last two issues of this paper, I fully exposed the lies that have been told all over the country, in pulpits, in many newspapers, from scores of platforms and in the religious press, concerning the International Freethought Conference. These religious stories were not mere mistakes. They were deliberate and calculated lies, and the utterers of them refuse to be converted. Copies of the *Freethinker* containing a plain and authoritative account of the origin and finances of the Congress have been sent to every religious paper in the country—excluding Parish Magazines—to large numbers of newspapers, and to many members of the House of Lords and of the House of Commons. One would have thought that in the face of this plain and precise account of the origin and aims of the Congress, the most elementary decency would have called forth many expressions of regret, if only in the form of another lie that the circulators of the first one had been misinformed. Of all the religious papers only one has reached me, the *English Churchman,* with a half-hearted apology in the shape of casting some doubt on the truth it has not the courage openly to deny, winding up with a " it remains to be seen." The other papers are, up to the present, silent. They do not care whether the statements made are true or false. The main thing, the thing that carries with it an adequate apology in the eyes of the majority of believers, is that the lie was directed against Freethought. These people are loyal to their church or chapel, to their minister, to the " gospel," to their readers and listeners to the extent of guarding them from taking any interest in Freethought. In the catalogue of loyalties, loyalty to truth and to common decency of intercourse has no place.

As to the ordinary press, that, for the most part is interested only in circulation, or playing to the interests of this or that class. When the lie is exposed one may get from the pulpit silence in some cases, but from none is there a word of reprobation of the orgy of lying that is carried on. And both the ones who are silent, and those who are vocal, rely upon the instrument of boycott. They know that for one of the general public who read the contradiction there are five hundred who hear only the lie of the religious teacher or read only the lie of the religious press.

I hope that Freethinkers will read aright the lesson of the situation. We have always depended upon personal propaganda, and we shall be forced to depend upon it for a long time to come. We are fighting today, not against a legal, openly avowed censorship, but against censorship in its most cowardly and most contemptible form. A censorship that is based upon force openly applied may leave a man none the worse in that he has complied with it. But a censorship that lives upon a professional freedom, that gains its end by slander and boycott, and which feels it will remain free from punishment or the contempt of their neighbours, cannot but act as a slow poison in the social body. It makes men think twice before they say what they know is true, because they feel they are risking their position in the world of business, or in public life. It makes the teacher hide the truth from his pupils and so destroys the better part of his educational value. It makes the parent the enemy of his child, and each man a hypocrite towards his neighbour.

We have no legal censorship in this country. True! There is no need for it. We can and do carry on a censorship in the name of freedom, and a boycott in the name of liberty. What can anyone desire more? A legal censorship may be destroyed in a night. But

a censorship that works in the dark, that assumes the air of a moral guide to generation after generation, that poisons the intellectual atmosphere we breathe, is like an hereditary disease. It may take generations before it is finally wiped out.

Chapman Cohen.

Godly Gabble

"You do not believe, you only believe that you believe.—*Coleridge.*

"There have been, and are, forms of religion to which alcohol would be preferable."—*Wm. Archer.*

One of the stock-ideas of Christian advocacy is the necessary association between the Orthodox faith and right conduct, between Freethought and Vice. Bad as the argument is, it has been brought forward on countless occasions. It has been the burden of thousands of sermons; it has cropped up in tracts and parish magazines, and, latterly, it has illuminated the newspaper press. The last was, indeed, a perilous proceeding, because journalists are not theologians, and have but a nodding acquaintance with the numerous subjects they so brilliantly mishandle.

A recent example occurred in the *Daily Express* (London) February 15, when Mr. James Douglas did his utmost to reduce the argument to absurdity, and succeeded uncommonly well, considering that he is but an amateur at theology, and not a professional. The article in question professed to deal with the delightful subject, "Can a Business Man be a Christian?" Brother Douglas decided that the association is not only possible, but probable, but he need not have wasted so much good ink and paper on this matter. If, on the other hand, he had decided in the negative, the popular journalist would indeed have placed himself in a dilemma. For the dear clergymen with their gospel-shops, themselves are but tradesmen, and it would have been very rude to have suggested that these salaried sons-of-God could on no account be Christians, when their very livelihood depended upon the association in the popular mind.

Mr. Douglas is soon kicking over the traces. In his own exuberant and forceful way he waives all impediments, and leaves his readers panting after him in vain. He claims that the City of London's business reputation for honesty, integrity, and fair dealing is founded on Christian principles, and this is true of all classes, all professions, and all avocations. If this precious argument is worth a solitary button, it implies that reputable Jewish bankers are, in reality, Christians; that the Pagan officials of a Japanese shipping company are Christians; and that the honourable Confucian proprietor of a Chinese chop-suey restaurant at Limehouse must also be a Christian; which we all know is not the case. Mr. Douglas has not finished his argument; he has only just started. It is the precious Christian principles which prevent the humble office-boy from stealing stamps, and the same beautiful deterrent which stops the boss from pinching millions of money, and, presumably, from cutting a rival's throat. It is too good to be true, for Mr. Douglas, as a journalist, might have heard of the very Christian directors of the Liberator Building Society, who caused such a sensation years ago, and of many other cases of religious rogues who were pious enough the while they were thieving.

Arguing with Mr. Douglas is rather tiresome. It is like punching a pillow; when you press him in one place, he pops up in another. Before you have pinned him down, he is on another tack. Listen to his sober statement:—

> One of the finest Christians I ever knew was an Agnostic He belied his own rather naïve unbelief, for the Christian flame burned in his business life—He was Christlike, etc.

Characteristically, no hint is given as to the man's name. Like so many heroes of tracts and parish magazines, he is Mr. Nobody of Nowhere. Can there be the slightest doubt that Mr. Douglas himself is shamelessly playing with words in writing such delirious jargon. It is difficult to understand why a man with a reputation to lose can write in such a strain, and it is still more difficult to understand why an editor should print, and actually pay, for such purple writing. Perhaps Mr. Douglas was not directly conscious of writing mischievous nonsense, for the opium of religion plays strange tricks with its votaries, but by so writing he is deliberately debasing the moral currency. Where is the sense of suggesting that if people had not been influenced by the Christian tradition they would have been wicked and dangerous men? Abyssinia is a Christian country, has been a Christian country longer than Britain, yet it is the last stronghold of the infamous slave-trader. Spain is a Christian country, yet the principal recreation of the people is bull-fighting, a brutal and disgusting pastime. The United States of America is a Christian country, yet it is saturated with "graft," and lynching and maltreatment of coloured people is far too rife. But, why continue? Mr. Douglas, as a journalist, should be more familiar with these things than the ordinary man.

The perfectly silly idea that a good Freethinker is a Christian all the time, without realizing it, is not Mr. Douglas's own. It was said of Shelley, who died over a century ago. It was repeated of Bradlaugh, who died near half a century ago. Why then should Mr. Douglas adopt this peculiar piece of imbecility? His other argument that the decencies and virtues of life are due solely to Christian influences is just so much twaddle. Our criminals are subjected to Christian influence from the cradle to the grave, yet they are criminals and not saints. How much Christian influence contributed to the greatness of Confucius, Buddha, Plato, and Socrates, all of whom shed lustre on the human race? Where was this alleged influence in the case of the heroes of Plutarch's "Lives"? All the non-Christian countries have produced millions of decent, honourable people, and many of outstanding claims to attention. Christianity had nothing whatever to do with the matter.

Mr. Douglas pretends that the Christian Religion is an evangel of love, overlooking the fact that this humanitarian gloss is but a latter-day veneer to bolster a decaying vested interest. It is a piece of priestly camouflage. Love, indeed! What has the teaching of the fall of man, of eternal punishment, of a literal hell of fire, to do with love? It was this alleged religion of love which littered Christendom with monasteries and nunneries; which burnt people alive for heresy, and which actually retarded progress for centuries. "Semper Eadem" is the motto of the most formidable Christian Church; "Blood and Fire" of the Salvation Army, a mushroom of yesterday. Christian influence, forsooth! As late as the nineteenth century of the Christian Era, in this England of ours the penal code was so savage that people were hanged for stealing five shillingsworth of goods. As recently as 1870 the majority of the population was illiterate and lived under conditions which to-day would result in prosecution from the authorities. What sort of man is Mr. Douglas to preach to people? The Church schools of to-day are the worst staffed, worst equipped, and the scholars the worst educated in the whole country, and, as a journalist, he must know it if he ever leaves his office.

Christian influence is no better than Mumbo Jumbo influence. If any body of men should represent Christian influence it is the bishops of the so-called Church of England. They are not ordinary Christians, they are more than reverend, they are right-reverend; they are right reverend sons-of-God. Their record in the House of Lords as legislators, shows that they are the hindmost of the cave-men of politics, and that they are the bitterest enemies of Democracy. These bishops voted against humanitarian alterations to our harsh penal code; they supported flogging in the army and navy; they voted against extending the franchise to women, and they even objected to the provision of seats for tired shop assistants. They opposed everything of a progressive nature, not on one or two occasions but of deliberate and set purpose, until the very name of the bishops became a hiss and a byword. Despite Brother Douglas, and his fellow sentimentalists, the less Christian influence we have the better. Indeed, we shall, as a nation, never be really civilized until we have rid ourselves of this drawback. For, in the last analysis, the alleged voice of God is but the voice of the priest furthering Priestcraft.

Mimnermus.

Daniel Defoe and the Dissenters

With the Revolution of 1688, and in the reign of William and Mary, Dissenters who desired to enjoy the ordinary rights of Churchmen to political and social standing sometimes evaded the provisions of the Test Act by occasional attendance at Anglican services. There they received the Sacrament according to the rites of the Establishment. Opinions vary concerning the morality of this proceeding but, be this as it may, occasional conformity by men of pronounced Nonconformist convictions infuriated and aroused the scorn of the more truculent and fanatical members of the High Church Party who denounced those who thus nullified the Test Act as time-servers, brazen hypocrites and trimmers.

In 1702 a Bill was introduced into Parliament to end this alleged outrage, and while its provisions were being warmly debated, an anonymous work appeared entitled *The Shortest Way with the Dissenters*. The writer, Daniel Defoe, the creator of *Captain Singleton* and the immortal *Robinson Crusoe* was the Dissenting son of Nonconformist parents who was, perhaps, one of those Nonconformists who nonconform very much. Defoe once aspired to enter the Dissenting ministry, but subsequently concluded that the position of pastor was precarious, and at times undignified. He then decided to go into business, and after various vicissitudes became one of the greatest journalists and authors of the eighteenth century. He was ever ar apostle of freedom, and was utterly at variance with the persecuting spirit which animated the promoters of the measure before Parliament in 1702.

In an earlier *Essay upon Projects* (1698) Defoe proved himself markedly progressive. In this he recommended road management, friendly and insurance societies, savings' banks, idiot asylums, the establishment of academies and reform in the bankruptcy laws. These suggestions show him to have been a shrewd observer and a man of advanced views.

When a stormy pamphleteer sneered at William III., as a mere Dutchman in an effusion entitled *The Foreigners*, Defoe retorted with his *True Born Englishman*. However uncouth the verses of this satire, its power is indisputable. The English are depicted as a mongrel race born and bred from the refuse of Europe through the centuries. This unpalatable poem proved an extraordinary success. At a time when general illiteracy is supposed to have prevailed, Defoe declares in the preface to his *Collected Writings* that in 1705, nine genuine, and 12 pirated editions had appeared, and 80,000 copies disposed of in the streets.

In 1697, the Lord Mayor of London created a sensation by officially attending both church and chapel, and Defoe then rebuked the inconsistency displayed, and declared that the all-important principle of Dissent was the wickedness of conformity. And even when the High Church Party introduced their Bill, Defoe stated that the measure would purge Dissent from a scandal. As a matter of fact, Defoe would have swept all tests aside.

But, however inconsistent Defoe himself may appear, the satirical character of his tract was so cleverly concealed that it was seriously regarded as a sincere attack on Dissent in general, much as in the nineteenth century, Samuel Butler's satire was acclaimed by certain solemn people as a satisfactory apology for the Christian creed.

In the second volume of his *Burned Books*, Mr. Gillett thus summarizes Defoe's satire: "It expressed regret that James I. and Charles I. had not dealt more severely with the whole brood in the days when they were fewer, and might have been wholly exterminated. The treatment meted out to the French Protestants by their King was cited with approval, and similar procedure was advised for the time at hand. That they were said to be very numerous presented no sufficient reason for toleration, and the fact that there was a common foreign foe made good reason for being rid of a domestic enemy. The making of a severe law was advocated whereby, 'Whoever was found at a Conventicle should be banished the nation and the Preacher be hanged..' Such treatment was warranted to work a thorough cure and to usher in the time that 'should make us all One again.' The practice of compounding by a money fine of five shillings per month for absence from the sacrament, and a shilling per week for staying from church was held up to fine scorn. 'This is selling them a liberty to transgress for so much money.' The plea proceeded thus: 'If it be a crime of the highest consequence, both against the peace and welfare of the nation, the Glory of God, the good of the Church and the happiness of the soul: let us rank it among capital offences.' At the end was found the following paragraph: 'Alas, the Church of England! What with Popery on one hand, and Schismatics on the other, how has she been crucified between two thieves. Now Let us Crucify the Thieves.'"

There was not a word in the entire discourse to indicate that the writer was anyone save a bitterly intolerant Anglican. One High Churchman declared that Defoe's tract stood second only to the Holy Bible in his esteem. But, when the real sentiments of the bigots were thus exposed to the light of day, they roused anger and resentment rather than approval. Feeling ran so high that the very Tories who were supposed to cherish the doctrines expounded by Defoe were driven by common decency to associate themselves with those who unreservedly censured the writer and his book.

When the true nature of Defoe's malicious pamphlet was perceived it was condemned to the flames. But the scandal was reinforced by the publication of a product of the secret press in answer to Defoe's satire. The entire text of the condemned tract was reprinted by way of preface to the reply. Whatever the religious sentiments of Defoe were, and they were certainly latitudinarian, his anonymous critic conjectured that he must have been "one of the worst of men." Whoever Defoe's assailant was his powers of invective

were impressive. "It were endless to animadvert," he asserted, "upon all the extravagant Passages in this invenomed Libel, which is writ on purpose to set the Nation in a flame, and to engage us in an intestine War that the French King may have an opportunity to force the Pretender upon us. His advising to send all our Dissenters to the Gallies and Gallows, his sounding a charge to the general massacring of 'em, and his proposing the French King's Methods with his Protestant subjects . . . as a fit model and proper instance for our Incouragement to attempt it; and his advice to subdue the Scots instead of uniting 'em, are so unpolitick, inhuman and unchristian, that I could not at first persuade myself that any Man who calls himself a Protestant, could be so much inspir'd by Hell as to write such a Libel."

Defoe's effusion seems to have exasperated everyone. The devoutly intolerant cursed the unknown penman for carrying the vile principle of persecution to its logical conclusion. The sarcasm and irony of the tract were still hidden to the majority although a spirit of smiling mockery seemed to haunt its pages.

Meanwhile, the measure so dear to the hearts of the High Church Party, which was devised to prevent the taking of Communion at certain intervals, while usually worshipping in Dissenting conventicles, was introduced. The Commons displayed much more sectarian bitterness than the Lords and recommended severer penalities. Great excitement prevailed, and the Peers' amendments were rejected by the lower Chamber, although from a modern standpoint these amendments were very mild. Practically all they claimed was that while "Dissenters ought to have their Liberty of Conscience, at the same time they ought to be kept out of Power, or any share in the Government."

While the Houses were still wrangling complaint was lodged against Defoe. Passages from his satire were read in the Commons, and it was immediately resolved that the tract contained false and scandalous reflections on Parliament, and was calculated to foster sedition. So it was ordered to be burned by the Common Hangman in the New Palace Yard, Westminster, on February 26, 1703.

The interest and excitement thus occasioned settled the fate of the Occasional Conformity Bill for the time being. As Gillett observes: "The sarcasm of the writer had been too subtle for the Parliamentary mind, but the heartless revelations of the inmost wishes and purposes which inspired the occasional conformity bill was fitly described as a 'reflection' on the body." In 1704 the Commons ordered the printing of the Bill, but to pass it proved impossible. Not until 1711, when the Tories of that day were triumphant was a similar measure placed on the Statute Book, when there was no Defoe to restrain them. But the Act was short lived and was repealed eight years later.

In 1704, a Whig writer, John Tutchin, published *The Observator*, which so infuriated the reactionaries that they strove to restore the licensing system abandoned under William III. But opposition to this iniquitous measure proved powerful, and it was allowed to lapse, although the repressive spirit was then very pronounced in obscurantist circles. It is with us still, and may be revived at any moment.

When the identity of the author of *The Shortest Way* was established a reward was promptly offered for his arrest. The official document is of interest as it supplies all the information we possess concerning Defoe's personal appearance. He is described as "a middle-sized spare man about forty years old, of a brown complexion . . . a hooked nose, a sharp chin, grey eyes and a large mole near his mouth."

After Defoe's apprehension he was tried, convicted and sentenced at the Old Bailey to a heavy fine, to stand three times in the pillory and be imprisoned during the Queen's pleasure. While in the pillory the crowd protected him from insult and outrage, and crowned him with flowers.

When he was restored to liberty Defoe resumed his prolific pen, his world-famous *Robinson Crusoe* being his best remembered masterpiece. He died in poverty and was buried in Bunhill Fields, in London. A shaft denotes Defoe's last resting place—a memorial erected over his remains from contributions made by 1,700 children, who had derived delight and instruction from the story of Crusoe and his factotum, Man Friday.

T. F. Palmer.

Trained Animals

It is said, and I fear with truth, that much cruelty is employed in preparing animals for public performances. I have no way of telling how a seal feels when balancing a ball on his snout, or whether a terrier likes walking on his fore paws. Both are unnatural antics, but then, riding a bicycle is very pleasurable; undoubtedly human beings get a thrill out of sensations foreign to their constitution. A good deal of the trouble in civilization is due to man forgetting that he is an animal and a quadruped; his walking on two feet, although the accepted method now, was really at one time as unnatural as the strut of the trained poodle.

What does the word training imply, and what is the object aimed at? In the case of the brute creation the ability to perform something—even very clumsily—that is common to humans is accounted marvellous. A monkey eating with a fork would be well trained, but then a tailless man doing with great effort on a flying trapeze what the Simian does with ease will always evoke applause.

Physical training, moral training, mental training—Parliament, Pulpit, Press, all shriek these phrases at us. *What is all this training for?*

There can be no sensible argument against fitness, nor against the inculcation of moral principles, and goodness knows, there is some slight need for training in thinking. So far so good. But when we come to look into the matter critically we find much the same phenomena as in the case of the animals—creatures merely doing things that they have been forced to do, that they have instinctively little interest in, and that may frequently be repugnant to them. The unthinking conformists and the crafty time-servers are always said to be "well trained."

Recent constitutional changes in Ireland have again focussed attention upon the acute differences between Eire and Ulster. Beyond the facts that Mr. De Valera seeks for a "United Ireland," and that Lord Craigavon stoutly repudiates that claim, the average Englishman know little of Irish politics, particularly if he is not a religious partisan. There is a good story told of an English circus making its first appearance in Ireland. Belfast was the first town visited. The concluding item was by the performing bears. After a sham fight, one of them was "killed"; four comrades wrapped him in the Union Jack and solemnly carried him off, the band playing "Rule Britannia," while the audience cheered vociferously.

But, on the first night in Dublin, there was something approaching a riot. The English manager was bewildered that what had met with approval in one Irish city should meet with such resentment in another. Ruefully he contemplated cutting out the offending act in the interest of peace, although it was the best item in his programme. But his agent

was an Irishman and an old campaigner. After a conference he obtained control of the situation. Instead of sacrificing the star turn, he hurriedly got out a special bill announcing "The Patriotic Bears from Belfast." Instantaneous success!

On the Tuesday night the theatre was crowded, a great number quite obviously armed with missiles to greet the detested Union Jack when it appeared. All went well with the early turns, but naturally the Englishman was nervous when the bears took the stage. The sham fight developed, and from his spy-hole in the wings he noticed the tough guys getting ready. But when the soldier bear was shot, he saw that the four comrades unfurled, not the Union Jack, but a huge Tricolour, and the orchestra thundered out "The Soldiers' Song." For a second or two there was consternation in the audience, then the humour of the situation dawned upon them, and the performance ended happily. As the house emptied one man was heard to say loudly to a companion: "Be Jasus, but them's well trained bastes."

And that's just how it is—a man or a baste is well trained when he does exactly what we like him to do. And so with one who thinks the same thoughts and reaches the same conclusions as those who trained him. Germany and Russia at once jump to the mind as communities where the people are all well trained bastes and where manifestations of individuality are sternly repressed. But we are rather apt to under-estimate the mental tyranny in our schools, and to overestimate the freedom of England. While it is true that in the past fifty years Freethought has won many battles against the forces of reaction, it would also be correct to say that since the war period we have allowed personal liberty to be considerably restricted. All censorship is not so transparent as that of the B.B.C., but for that very reason it may be more potent. The man who thinks, and who refuses to be trained to think in a definite groove, who dares to proclaim what he truly believes, will still be at a disadvantage with the well trained baste who will stand on one leg, and say, "Yes sir, no sir, whatever you say sir!" Still, in England, he will have many compensations. A rich literature of Rationalist and Libertarian thought will be at his disposal, hundreds of kindred spirits will give him intellectual fellowship, and numerous advanced groups will offer him a spiritual home.

But if he live in Eire, the man of independent mind will find himself a pariah, sans books, sans intellectual friendship, sans the right to speak or write his thoughts. He will have no lawful access to many of the noblest books in the language, he will always have to guard against an "indiscreet" remark that does not fit in with infantile mentality, and if he is fortunate enough to encounter other freedom lovers, their meetings will have to be "underground." The black army of animal trainers who control the country have no use for thinking men. Their existence depends on their power to keep a whole nation in the position of well-trained bastes.

J. Effel.

The theologians distinguish two sorts of religions. All religions except their own are inventions of man whereas their own religion is an emanation from God.

Karl Marx.

As to the issue of the coming conflict, can anyone doubt? Whatever is existing on fiction and fraud will be overthrown. Faith must render an account of herself to Reason. Mysteries must give place to facts. Religion must relinquish that imperious and domineering position which she has so long maintained against science.

Draper, "Conflict between Religion and Science."

The Penitent Form

In a recent article I mentioned that as a youngster I made my appearance at the Penitent Form, when, presumably, there was Joy in Heaven. It is difficult in retrospect to account for this early ebullition of contrition on my part. With the exception of being conscious of a few unauthorized visits to the larder, and a rather too exclusive partiality for certain parts of God's Holy Book, I am not now aware of any particular predilection for sin, at that early age. All the same, the Joy in Heaven from theological first principles was justifiable. My burden of iniquity had not to be referred to concrete instances for demonstration. I was *born in sin and shapen in iniquity*, and even if my childish comportment fitted in with all mundane ideas of propriety, the stain of original sin could not be wiped away by mere good conduct. Good conduct committed when outside the influence of Grace was but as filthy rags. One had, as well, to accept the Plan of Salvation, drink the blood and eat the body; then, and only then, did one become *good*. Good for what? Good enough to take one's place in the eternal choir; good enough to agree with God that the damning for ever and ever in a hot hell of our personal friends, our brothers and sisters, even our parents, was an act illustrative of the Glory and Mercy of God.

Penitence was always a trump card of the Christian. "Repent ye, for the Kingdom of God is at hand." Thrust aside your *sins*—and (be it not forgotten), supplement this by accepting the Means of Grace, a commodity dispensed by an esoteric body possessing magic credentials. The word *sin* never had the same meaning as anti-social conduct; anti-social conduct is immorality. Immorality is the type of conduct which tends to disturb social harmony and, ultimately, social existence itself. Sin is ecclesiastical. The first sin in the ecclesiastical scale of enormity is the sin of unbelief or wrong doctrine; this sin is so gross and smells so disagreeably to heaven that it warrants the sinless ones subjecting the sinful to extermination, painless extermination, if possible, but extermination. Opposition to the received Theological Opinion when in power was the sin of sins, unless, indeed, the Sin against the Holy Ghost robbed it of priority. This latter sin, in the theological equation, being entirely undefined could have been committed unknowingly by anybody—the boy who knelt before the penitent form could have committed it—and this weird and terrifying circumstance brought grist to the ecclesiastical mill. No wonder men like John Bunyan were willing to acclaim themselves as Sinners. It would have been plainly moral pride to have proclaimed themselves free of an undefinable sin. After these came other *sins*, such as the sin of not attending mass, of not attending confession, of not observing the Sabbath Day, of not saluting the Holy Procession. *These were the things that mattered.* Nowadays we are assured that it is other things that matter. But that is only because the great majority of mankind have reached a contempt for the theological idea of *sin*, and are not only concerning themselves with human problems, but are quite content to take a chance on the everlasting Summer Land, if reaching it means bowing to those who have the keys of Heaven and Hell in their possession, and accepting their dogmas.

The cry of the Penitent is the foundation stone of the Church. The words *Peccavi, Mea Culpa*, are to the cleric, the finest music. The finest music, that is, coming from the lips of the *layman*.

. . . . .

Equally impressive is Penitence on the lips of the

Priest. Nothing can be more impressive than the words of contrition that roll out from every pulpit in Christendom, every Sunday. Mea Culpa, Mea Culpa! Every modern Christian volume is replete with contrition. It is not for nothing that our Glorious Christian Church has extolled the value of repentance. They have taught their flocks the lesson and now, at long length, they are bettering the instruction.

Listen to them, tumbling over each other in their haste to make amends! We have taught, they say, that the Holy Bible is the word of God, every word of which emanates from the Most High, who has inspired writers, translators and proof-readers, alike. This teaching is not true; the Bible is full of inaccuracies, its science is deplorable, its morality is defective. We were wrong. Mea Culpa!

The men who brought new truths to light, who advocated the use of Reason, untrammelled by Church tradition and dogma, we are afraid we denounced as the Emissaries of Hell. Copernicus, Galileo, Darwin, and thousands of other minor but equally heroic souls have we tortured, killed and, when these methods became impossible, blackguarded. We were wrong. If the world moves, all now know that these men have been mainly instrumental in helping on the movement. We apologize. Mea Culpa!

We have taught that it is all important that man gets hold of the Right Belief, that entrance to Eternal Joy or Eternal Pain depends upon correctness of view. Now, you can believe as you like, and it has no effect on your eternal destiny. We were wrong. We have sinned against Heaven. Mea Culpa!

When will this epidemic of Contrition cease? Parson after parson, priest after priest, are donning sackcloth, rolling in ashes, and apologizing in Latin. Honesty is at length triumphant; frankness, decency and self-knowledge are entering upon a new era.

T. H. Elston (February 17, 2938.)

Acid Drops

We have had several letters this week from readers asking us what we think of the international situation. It is a little off our beat in these columns, but we may venture to sum it up as follows. We are bound to have an armament strong enough to lick the other fellow, just as he ought to have an armament strong enough to lick us, and when each is strong enough to lick the other, then we shall have what is understood as a balance of power. But armaments mean money, and if we are to spend money on armaments, then we must get money from investments. A very likely field for this is the other fellow who must have money to buy his armaments. That appears to be the ground for the rumoured loan to Italy for example, because if Italy does not have arms to threaten us, we should not be justified in making armaments to fight Italy. So, if we lend money to Italy, or sell it things with which to build armaments, we shall then be able to go on building armaments ourselves, and so see that we and the other fellow are able at any time to lick each other. It is on these grounds that the balance of power may be maintained. Each country must grant the other country the right to arm, not merely grant it, but supply it with the means of arming. It is in this way that good-will is maintained and we make certain that the arms which are made for fighting are never allowed to break the peace.

And here is a suggestion that might help. Hitler has set the example of having a couple of his men placed in the Austrian Cabinet, so that they may report to him anything that is decided on. Why not make that a universal rule? Let each of the European nations appoint a man to sit in each Cabinet of the other parties. By this means everyone will know what the other is doing, and as they are all honourable men, there will thus be a guarantee of everything being straightforward and above board. This would abolish the secret service of each country, and the benevolent intentions of Hitler, Mussolini and others would be seen in a way that would leave no mistake as to their generosity.

Late again! The Archbishop of Vienna has ordered prayers to be said for the independence of Austria. Now if that had been done before Hitler saw the Austrian Chancellor, something might have happened.

It is not often that we use this column to give Christians a lesson in theology, and we do it now in order to illustrate how little the majority of believers understand their own religion. That on the whole is fortunate for the parsonry. But we have noted in the press, since the publication of the Report on Doctrine, the expression of surprise that certain "advanced" clergymen, while professing belief in the "Incarnation," have expressed doubts about the Virgin Birth. The clergy indicated have affirmed that while the incarnation is essential to Christian belief the Virgin Birth is not; and in this we agree with the clergy. The two doctrines are actually distinct. Incarnation means exactly what the world implies—the enclosing of something invisible in a fleshly form. We have this illustrated in such figurative speech as an incarnation of beauty, or goodness, and so forth. Theologically we have it in "an incarnation of the Devil" or an "incarnation of God." And when the parson talks of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ, the expression does not involve the belief in a Virgin Birth, but merely that God has become incarnated in a man.

These two related things, whilst both belonging to the very lowest stages of human culture, are nevertheless distinct. The belief in a Virgin Birth means the absence of an earthly father, and that finds it origin in the state of ignorance, which at one time prevailed, concerning the part played by man in the birth of a baby. There are enough survivals of magical customs to procure children, and there are enough illustrations among primitive peoples to lead to the belief that an understanding of the part played by the male is of late growth. Originally it would seem that the birth of a baby is due to a tribal spirit entering the mother's womb. Between conception and birth the interval is long enough, and the consequences of sexual relations uncertain enough to make the real facts a matter of acquired knowledge. The Virgin Births of great men and gods (there are very numerous instances of these), would thus stand as a survival of what was once accepted as a general fact.

The belief in gods who become incarnated in men is also a very primitive fact; this may occur with both young and elderly men, although the usual time is during the period of adolescence. But there are literally hundreds of such cases, and primitive peoples still accept the phenomenon as a fact. And at the Coronation of George VI. we had a rehearsal of this primitive belief in the transformation of a mere man into a God. There was no other significance in the ceremony. It will thus be seen that it is theologically quite correct for a parson to say he believes in the Incarnation of God in Christ, while doubting whether a Virgin Birth—a child born without an earthly male parent—ever occurred. The explanation of the distinction is that while both beliefs are of savage origin, the one is too glaring in its absurdity to command assent from a civilized intelligence; the other may be made so indefinite in either the wording or the meaning that it may, for a while, pass muster. These men are not lying in the ordinary sense of the word; they could only be accused of lying where a developed sense of truth existed, and that is not in the Churches.

But the essential fact is overlooked. This is, that since the rise of Christianity this belief in the Virgin Birth has been a vital part of Christian belief. Generation

after generation has professed belief in it, and the clergy have preached it as something not to be questioned. Meanwhile a few are daring to say it is probably a lie—it never occurred. And the few who do say so, say it outside the pulpit. In the pulpit they continue to repeat the old belief as though it had never been questioned. And it still remains part and parcel of the official creeds of the Churches. The pulpit is the last place on earth in which truth will find a welcome and a home.

We fancy someone has been pulling the leg of the editor of the *Yorkshire Post*. In its issue for February 18, the following letter appears, apropos the "Godless Conference" lie campaign :—

> Sir,—Will you allow me to suggest another way of reaction to the "Godless" Congress than that of your correspondent of to-day's issue? Why not treat the Congress members in a Christian way as brothers and children of the Father they have lost? Why not show them such kindness that they will "feel" an atmosphere they cannot explain?
>
> This does not mean to acquiesce in their doctrines. Let us organize a welcome by crowds of Christian people who will pray for their enlightenment in this country. Let us organize counter-progaganda and finally invite the Congress to a Royal Albert Hall meeting where our Archbishop shall explain the Christian faith and a massed choir sing the "Hallelujah" chorus. Could not the coming of the Congress be turned into a great opportunity both for them and ourselves?—Your, etc.,
>
> A.H.

It would be quite interesting to see the Churches inviting the World Union of Freethinkers to the Albert Hall in order to kill it with Christian kindness. Perhaps the writer has in mind the kind of "Christian kindness" with which Christian treatment of Freethinkers has been long associated. Meanwhile it would be interesting if Christians stopped lying—say, for six months—about Freethinkers.

The Bishop of Ely says it is "impertinent" to disbelieve in the existence of angels and demons. Of course it is. It means flying in the face of the actions and teachings of Jesus Christ. It *is* impertinent for any Christian to disbelieve in angels and demons. But it is damned idiotic to believe in them all the same. Still, the Bishop is true to his salt.

A case brought before the Federal Court in Florida, U.S.A., raised an issue that will be new to many people. During the hearing of an insurance case a witness said he had no money, but had not long been married. The Judge asked for an explanation. Thereupon the man produced a Bible and read the following (Deut. xxiv. 5) :—

> When a man hath taken a new wife, he shall not go to war, neither shall be be charged with any business; but he shall be free at home for one year, and shall cheer up his wife which he hath taken.

It is to be noted that the command refers to a "new" wife. If the wife was an old one—a wife that belonged to someone else—she probably did not want cheering up. Anyway, the man who gets married and does not go out to earn a living for his wife, may put in the book of *Deuteronomy* as a justification.

> A peasant woman of Upper Bavaria was sentenced in Munich to four months imprisonment for refusing to attend air-raid precautions classes, which are compulsory in Germany for every able-bodied adult.
>
> Her statement that "Her life was in God's hand" was interpreted by the court as sabotage of the security of the nation.

We commend the poor woman's "true Christianity" to the congregations of these isles, which are being canvassed to organize similar precautions.

A section of parishioners at Manston, Cross Gates, Leeds, have refused to have their children prepared for confirmation by the High Church incumbent. In a letter to the Bishop of Ripon they say "we, the parents of the children, will not allow our children to be exposed to the taint of Anglo-Catholicism." They will not attend, nor allow their children to attend Mass at St. James's Church, and add, "We would rather leave the Church of England altogether." That seems to be a clearly indicated method of solving the difficulty. It would appear that in spite of the willingness of the Higher Ecclesiasticism to eliminate doctrinal disagreement in the Church of England, there still remains an irreducible minimum on which no compromise is permissible.

The Rev. E. W. W. Penfold, Rural Dean of Worthing, is issuing an appeal for £2,500 to complete the work of rebuilding the parish church of Durrington, a church in which no service has been held for over 200 years. Fifty years ago, says Mr. Penfold, he had a vision that one day he would be asked to rebuild the church and would conduct services in it. If he had had, at the same time, a vision of the churches of to-day half-filled, and less than half-filled, all over the country, it might have turned his enthusiasm into other channels.

The Bishop of Chelmsford, according to the *Sunday Express*, is one of our most outspoken churchmen. In that paper is also printed a specimen of his quality :—

> Bringing up a large family is a great joy, but not for people whose standard of pleasure is excitement and selfishness, nor for people who are victims of fear.
>
> "Why should we have children," they say, "if they are to be shot down or blown to pieces in the next war?"

So this is selfishness. We are all for outspokenness, but it is, at the same time, better to talk sense than nonsense.

Rickmansworth scored a smashing victory against the Church the other week. The people wanted Sunday cinemas, and the chief opposition came from the vicars, the Baptist and Methodist parsons, a priest, and two doctors, with a couple of councillors and headmasters thrown in. All these interfering persons got what is called vulgarly "a smack in the eye," for the voting was 1631 in favour and 802 against. When the result was declared there was tremendous enthusiasm and the people danced in the streets for joy. Curious—but nobody as a rule is particularly enthusiastic when a new church is opened, at least we do not remember reading recently that people ever danced with joy about it. We hope that most of the other doleful districts cursed with similar parsons and kill-joys will now take heart and have Sunday cinemas if they have been obliged to do without them so far. They *will* have them one day—so why not now?

Fifty Years Ago

All the tortures belonging to the penal code of barbarism were described by saints as being reserved for the unbelieving in hell. Pious books for women and children were filled with such pictures. They have left a legacy of sadness, superstition and nervous disorder that can be traced to our own time.

Protestantism did nothing to lighten the realm of outer darkness. Calvin asks : "How is it that the fall of Adam involves so many nations, *with their infant children*, to eternal death without remedy, unless that it so seemed meet to God." The same holy Christian says of the damned : "For ever harassed with a dreadful tempest, they shall feel themselves torn asunder by an angry God, and transfixed and penetrated by mortal stings, terrified by the thunderbolts of God, and broken by the weight of his hand, so that to sink into any gulf would be more tolerable than to stand for a moment in these terrors." The great Puritan theologian, Jonathan Edwards, devotes an entire sermon to illustrating the doctrine that "the sight of hell torments will exalt the happiness of the saints for ever." Salvation Sal and Dick the Devil-dodger are to have their bliss enhanced by seeing Paine, Voltaire, Diderot, Humboldt, and Darwin writhing in the flames.

The Freethinker, March 4, 1888.

THE FREETHINKER

Founded by G. W. FOOTE

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Telephone No.: Central 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. Vick.—We know there is both room and need for Freethought propaganda in Bristol. If you know of a few local friends who will lend a hand, and they will get into touch with the General Secretary, something may be done during the forthcoming summer season.

B. Eastwood.—Thanks. Bent knees and closed eyes are symbolical of much of Christianity. Both attitudes are essential to real belief.

J. Petersen.—Pleased to hear from you. Hope you are keeping well.

Anti-Duhring.—Letter will appear next week. Sorry it is crowded out of this issue.

H.N.—The Annual Conference will be held this year in Glasgow. We shall have something special to announce concerning this in an early issue of the Freethinker.

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.

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

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.

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

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

Sugar Plums

To-day (March 6) Mr. Cohen will speak in the Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate, Leicester. This is the Fifty-seventh Anniversary of the Leicester Secular Society, and is made a commemorative occasion. There should be a record gathering of friends and members.

The Secular Society, Limited has just issued a pamphlet (64 pages) dealing with the life and work of Henry Hetherington. Hetherington was one of the pioneers of Freethought among the people, and took a very active part in a number of reforms, to which all of us owe so much. He was one of the pioneers of the Trades Union Movement, a doughty fighter for the freedom of the press, and a fearless fighter throughout the whole of his life. He went to prison three times, but his spirit was unbreakable. The sketch of his life is by Mr. Ambrose Barker, and, so far as we know is the only sketch now to be had. There is also a portrait of Hetherington—the only one we have ever seen. The price of the pamphlet is sixpence, by post sevenpence. It is a work that all reformers should have by them.

There will also be issued, next week, two more of Mr. Cohen's *Pamphlets for the People*, Nos. 11 and 12, "Deity and Design," and "What is the Use of a Future Life?" These pamphlets are still selling well, and are being found more than usually serviceable for handing to strangers and friends. Apropos of this fact the following reaches us from the Rationalist Society of Sydney, sending for a further supply of the *Pamphlets for the People*:—

> All Mr. Cohen's pamphlets sell well here in Sydney. Quite a number of our buyers hand them on to Christians with results to our cause in many cases. Every Sunday night, at our meetings, I notice new faces asking for copies.

This is good news, and we are glad to say that the pamphlets are proving themselves equally useful in this country.

We are pleased to see, from *Education*, Alderman Shennan, leader of the Liverpool Conservative Party, proposes to continue the policy of opposing grants of money to denominational schools for building purposes. He says that if religious sects desire new schools they should build them themselves. The Council was doing its job of providing both elementary and secondary schools, as well as exhibitions to universities. We hope the Liverpool Corporation will stick to this policy. At present the Government, in return for twenty-five per cent of the building cost, pays the other seventy-five per cent, and hands over the schools so built to denominational control. These schools must have both head-teacher and other teachers meet with the approval of this or that sect, which means in practice that few teachers who are not members of the sect to which the school belongs stand a chance of being appointed, and head-teachers none at all. The children of the country are sold to the sects in return for political support.

Apropos of school grants, we see that Lord Sankey is making an appeal for an order to take advantage of the opportunity afforded by the Government's seventy-five per cent of the cost. We know of nothing meaner or more criminal than this policy of selling the future of children for the sake of twenty-five per cent of the cost of school building. Just over a century ago England was making itself famous—or infamous—by making huge fortunes out of the murder of children in factories. It was not until the 1830's that an Act was passed prohibiting children *under nine* being employed in factories, with a working-day of twelve and fourteen hours. It is little better to sell the minds of children to sectarianism for the purpose of saving five shillings in the pound on buildings.

OLD AND NEW MORALITY

Think of the modern European attitude to slavery, even of the mildest forms, and of the history of the abolition of slavery in Europe and America. It is natural to regard the great moral advance, of which this modern loathing of slavery is but the most striking feature, as the work of the Christian religion. But it is clear that the teaching and nation-wide acceptance of Christianity does not directly produce such effects. No nation was ever more completely subject to the control of the Christian Church than the nation ruled by his most Christian Majesty, the Emperor of Spain, at the time when it applied the first fruits of modern knowledge to slaughter and destroy and, with utmost cruelty, reduce to slavery the ancient civilization of America; the same nation maintained within its own borders and in the name of Christianity all the savage horrors of the Inquisition.

Think also of the great missionary undertakings of modern times, with the many sustained efforts to bring the benefits of education, medicine, surgery, and hygiene to vast populations which receive them grudgingly. It is true that much of this enterprise is the work of the Christian Churches. Yet Spain in her great imperial days converted multitudes of the heathen; but her instruments were the sword and the stake. We still wage murderous wars; but the Red Cross is a wholly modern institution.

Think again of the strictly modern concern for the welfare of animals, of the laws which forbid cruelty to them; again a series of phenomena which seem to have no positive correlation with the effective sway of the Christian Churches, and have no parallel even among peoples whose religion has forbidden the taking of animal life.

W. McDougall, "The Frontiers of Psychology."

The Doctrine of Accommodation

III.

Divergences of the Inspired

God is constantly striving to become worthy of those who worship him. God does not moralize man; man moralizes the god he has created.

Even though the god be conceived as dynamic, as far as human knowledge and direction are concerned he is a static force as a conception. In Christianity this is reinforced by the further static tendencies of revelation and sacred books. Obviously, you cannot improve upon perfection; perfection implies a perpetual standstill order.

But religion, like everything else, cannot stand still in a world whose one consistent principle is change. It also has to struggle for existence. Hence, a religion is continually catching up with those who believe they are following it; and the attempt to " go forward standing still " is responsible for such remarkable documents as the report of the Archbishops' Commission on Doctrine.

The Church is again trying to catch up. It tried a little while ago on birth-control—on its own admission, not because it wished to pioneer the way, but because it could no longer avoid the issue—and the effort of the Bishops to meet the demands of its heretic modernists without offending its orthodox traditionalists resulted in one of those tortuous, muddleheaded pacts that God—through his emissaries—must make from time to time with the world, the flesh, and the devil as a necessary condition of his own survival.

The report on doctrine—though not yet officially ratified—is another of these catching-up compromises. Who among the educated members of the British public on which the Church relies for its survival now believes in such literal doctrines as infallibility of the Bible, the Garden of Eden and the fall of man, miracles, angels and demons? So what has been the " literal " of centuries of Christian persecution of people who refused to believe in the " literal," now becomes the " symbolic " of the " real Christian."

An evening newspaper has been passed over at this moment for me to read the following amusing note of correction under its leading article, " In last night's leader on the Aurora Borealis the sentence ' The Romans and Greeks defied the Aurora ' should, of course, have read ' deified the Aurora.' " Well, it's all in the spirit of the age; the Commission throughout their report are quite openly defying in the name of God what their Church has for centuries deified in the name of God.

In a way the Commission have created their own difficulties, for they tried to be honest—and honesty is fatal to honest-to-God religion. Blend reason and religion, and you are left with religion.

Because the Commission tried to be honest, their report becomes the more important. Its real importance is not so much because it is the Commission's report as such, but because of two other things. Firstly, it illustrates in a clear form the muddleheadedness inevitably associated with religion. Secondly, although thousands of Protestants do not consider the report in the least important, and will not bother to read it, the members of the Commission have had to do something which every Christian would find worth doing, but rarely does—they have had to re-examine their beliefs and the bases for those beliefs. The report, apart from its special limitations, is consequently an indication of what the most disdainful Christian would find necessary to do, at least to some degree, if he were confident enough to make an honest revaluation of his beliefs and try to align them with modern thought.

In the report itself, side by side with the Doctrine of Accommodation we have been examining, are enthroned those two invaluable friends of inexact religion, the Appeal to Symbolism and the Doctrine of Divergences.

Supreme example of the muddleheadedness of the report—or shall we say the confidence of the self-deceived?—is the bland way in which the Archbishop of York refers to the " unchanging truths of the Christian revelation . . . the truth of the Everlasting Gospel, unchanged in substance," and then tries to put this one across : " Indeed, we believe that its permanence amidst the welter of modern theories . . . may be one of its chief means of drawing to itself the attention of a bewildered generation."

Well, faith is blind, they tell us; and it seems it must also be deaf, or at least a little hard of hearing. The Church stands confident astride a perpetual landslide and declares that nothing moves. Let us bear this " permanence of the unchanging truths of the Everlasting Gospel " in mind as we take a final look over a few more points from the Commission's "agreement."

In his chairman's introduction the Archbishop tells us of " the divergent views still held among us " on points where " real agreement has proved impossible "; of " differences concerning our interpretation of the Person of Christ," tending to " divisions in our Church"; of the "real divisions concerning the Atonement "; of the Doctrine of the Church as containing " the subjects of most lively controversy "; of the " wide divergences within our Church " on the Doctrine of Sacraments, and the " sharpest controversy" in " some of the more debated points of Eucharistic doctrine "; and, on the credal affirmations, of the Commission " inevitably reproducing in some measure the divergences that mark the thought of scholars and theologians of our generation."

Christ's resurrection, he tells us, is " the central fact in human history," and " the central truth of Christianity," and he accepts both the physical resurrection and the Virgin birth " as historical facts." Yet so important are these " central historical facts," that it is not essential to believe in them as facts at all, for the Archbishop " fully recognizes the position of those who sincerely affirm the reality of our Lord's Incarnation without accepting one or both of these events as actual historical occurrences, regarding the records rather as parables than as history, a presentation of spiritual truths in narrative form."

And in case you had any idea that the job of the Church was to lead the way with any consistent form of faith, here are a few aspects of the Commission's Doctrine of Divergences. We are told of " allowances to be made for possible divergencies between the Biblical records and the historical facts "; that Christianity " is not committed to any one " of the several views on time and creation; that " the Christian doctrine of creation leaves abundant room for a variety of theories as to the evolution of the world " (with the Garden of Eden definitely " symbolical in value ").

There is " much confusion of thought regarding sin "; the Commission " are not agreed " in their interpretation of "man's bias towards evil"; the Church " is not committed to either " of two theories of the connexion between the Fall of Man and the Incarnation of Christ.

Admission of " a failure to reach a complete solution of the intellectual problem " of the relation of the divinity and humanity of Christ, is followed by one that " the historical evidence cannot be other than inconclusive " on the virgin birth. Though many of the Commission hold the virgin birth as integral, others believe in " normal conditions of human generation "—but the incarnation nevertheless remains

" the central truth of the Christian faith " and the " central fact in human history."

The resurrection of Christ " involves probably an element beyond our explaining." " The historical evidence, considered simply as such, implies that there is an underlying mystery to be explained " (how is historical evidence to be used except " simply as such "?). " Belief that the Lord was risen," however, " is compatible both with a realization that we cannot expect to reach clear or full knowledge in detail, and also with a variety of critical views." Though some of the members thought the gospel accounts of the resurrection " belong rather to the sphere of religious symbolism than to that of historical fact . . . on the other hand, there are reasons which make it difficult" to dismiss the traditional belief in the physical resurrection " as though it were a temporary and accidental appendage, which attached itself in the minds of His disciples to the truth of His spiritual survival."

When we come to " precise theories of the Divine nature apart from human experience, we are entering on a field where the task of the Church is to condemn any theories which conflict with Christian experience, not to enjoin any one theory upon all Christian people."

And on sacraments—" No Christian doubts that *in some sense* Christ is present in the Holy Communion " (with the usual " welter of theories," modern and ancient, from " real presence " to symbolism); " we are unable to give a decisive answer " on the permissible aspect of the use of the reserved sacrament, " because we are not agreed upon the application of the determining condition "; and " the precise relation between the gift bestowed in Baptism and the gift bestowed in Confirmation cannot be defined; a clear-cut answer is impossible."

" As to the question whether, or in what sense, there will be a ' Last Judgment ' . . . the Commission is united in believing that it is impossible to pronounce "; " so, again, we do not regard any one particular philosophical doctrine of immortality as being de fide for Christians "; while " special difficulty has attached to the traditional doctrine of the Resurrection of the Body." On the relation of the temporal to the eternal order, " we cannot expect a coherent scheme, but must be content to employ partially irreconcilable symbolisms, and to remain otherwise agnostic "; " whether in fact any soul will suffer final loss it is not possible for man to pronounce "; and " both on the grounds of the varieties of interpretations accepted by the Church at large in all periods and also on grounds of modern research, it is clear that the traditional scheme of the Christian doctrine of Death and Resurrection can be accepted only as the symbolic outline of the course of spiritual destiny, not as a chronological account of future events."

It is obviously impossible for man in his present state of knowledge to pronounce on a good many things, and if we were dealing with things admitted to be purely human, we would not cavil at the Commission's generously accommodating spirit. But we are not. We are dealing with God, and God, Christians so often tell us, is so obvious that " no sensible man can possibly be a positive Atheist." We are dealing with a God who is obvious, who solves all our problems, who lights up our darkness, dispels our ignorance, gives us knowledge and virtue and grace, makes all things clear to the happy believer, is the only one who can give value to the things of this world, gives us courage to live and confidence to die, and all the rest of the paraphernalia of Christian publicity. Also, we are dealing with God's own inspired Church, interpreting God's unique inspired record through God's direct advice, and receiving public credence and public money as England's own apostolic representative of God on earth.

What can the Commission representing that Church really tell us about that God, in spite of the time and money spent in publicizing him? They are agreed only on three things: (a) The necessity for the belief in God, and even more the belief in the need for a Church; (b) that God, in some manner they can't really agree about, became incarnate as Christ; and that the " central fact in human history " of Christ's resurrection is a reality which, " however explained," " ought to be affirmed," even though it may be only a reality as a " symbol of spiritual truth "; (c) that in some manner, allowing for as many varieties of interpretations as there are needs for meeting different types of belief and unbelief, the Unchanging Gospel, changing from age to age, from book to book, and from person to person, is, in some not necessarily explained manner, the actual word of God, through which God speaks to man, though what he says it says he said is not always what he actually did say, and what he actually did say is very often not at all what he actually meant.

Not a very impressive answer to fourteen or fifteen years' prayer for God's guidance!

Ronald Standfast.

(To be concluded)

Dr. Donald Soper and his " Critics "

The Rev. Donald Soper's promotion—he now occupies the position once filled by the Rev. Hugh Price Hughes—adds to his temptation to authorship. His latest book (*Christianity and Its Critics*; Hodder; 1s.) takes the Tower Hill orator a little out of his depth. It has all the faults of his B.B.C. pompousness, and little of the good humour of his Tower Hill books. The atmosphere of Broadcasting House has dried up much of his genial wit. His Tower Hill audiences are evidently more inspiring than the grim silence of bored, and probably inattentive " listeners."

It is inviting catastrophe for any controversialist to invent the objections and arguments which he airily professes to " answer "; it is at once too easy and too dull. It is not a question of good faith: it is quite possible that Dr. Soper thinks that his opponents and critics are as jejune as those who raise the questions he " answers." There is no evidence that Dr. Soper reads the books and periodicals of secularists, otherwise he might get somewhere nearer the real battlefield.

Then again, we may be doing him an injustice. His usual good-humoured pleasantries which make him an attractive figure on the platform would probably be blacked-out by the B.B.C. censor. A like fate would undoubtedly attend any attempt at stating (even if only to answer) the real case against religion. What the Churches and the Radio clerics like to picture as typical of the present-day Atheist is a remark like that quoted by Dr. Soper (p. 12): " Trust in Thomas Henry Huxley and thou shalt be saved." We wonder what " critic " of Christianity Dr. Soper is quoting from?

We scarcely imagine that Dr. Soper means to imply that anyone ever rejected the Christian mythology because " he can't stand this or that hymn, he dislikes a particular type of service," etc. Few people, we should say, would dismiss God and the Bible merely because Church Services are mostly a

wearisome bore. If the Churches cannot attract even the multitudes of credulous superstitious and ignorant masses, the case is bad indeed.

It is an underestimate of Dr. Soper's that "there are a vast number of decent people who have got very little use for the Church." It would have been worth while perhaps had Dr. Soper explained (if possible) what genuine USE anybody except the paid officials can find in the Church to-day. Dr. Soper is right in saying that the remark "See you in Church" is a slang expression indicating that "you have not the slightest idea when you will see him again."

According to Dr. Soper, people raise the objection, "Why have creeds and dogmas?" He thinks the objectors justified in refusing to join the Church until this criticism is met (p. 57). Yes, but how IS it met? All but the Roman Catholic and other extreme fundamentalists evade the intellectual problems involved in the particular dogmas which keep rational beings from religious beliefs. Dr. Soper no more faces them than do his fellow clerics.

It is a queer sphere of controversy wherein theologians like Dr. Soper (he is a Doctor of Divinity of course) profess to discuss, consider, and answer criticisms while simultaneously disparaging the only criterion by which man can judge, namely by the use of such reasoning power as he possesses. We rightly call a man insane or irresponsible in so far as he is incapable of reasoning. "A man," says Dr. Soper (p. 56), "must have more than intellectual reason for accepting Jesus Christ. What prevents most people from living the Christian life is finally a stop in their wills, not a stop in their minds." A sincere belief in this libel on humanity would naturally stop all argument. Dr. Soper falls back upon the wicked "Will." It is simply the out-worn doctrine of Original Sin.

A discerning critic is said to have complained to Dr. Soper: "You are just putting up Aunt Sallies so that you can knock them down again." Dr. Soper seems to admit the truth of this accusation, excusing himself by the plea that "Of course every criticism of Christianity can be regarded as an Aunt Sally." Such a judgment makes pious "answers" very easy indeed.

A "criticism" (we should call it "abuse") which Dr. Soper attributes to "many" of us is the expression: "Only a fool or a knave believes in this supernatural bunk." We are not aware of such a phrase appearing in any of our publications. We wonder if Dr. Soper is confusing his critics with his own Bible, or is he thinking of Beverley Nichols and a host of Christian advocates who constantly quote "The FOOL hath said. . . . As for the "knave" to whom Dr. Soper refers, we are inclined to think that he gets rather near to "knavish tricks" if he imagines that Atheists have a "will" not to believe.

Dr. Soper assures us that "the Archbishop of York is not a fool and George Lansbury is not a knave." We will put the Secularist comment in plain terms. History, experience, and statistics prove that a man may be a pious Christian believer, and yet he may have the grossest delusions, he may be a criminal (in the ordinary sense of the word), and a despoiler of his fellows. In other words, being a Christian does not prevent a man being a fool, a knave or both. The same may be said of any other belief or disbelief, but a pious knave has greater scope for his knavery or folly because of his piety.

Dr. Soper is "not content to leave these anti-Christian dogmatists alone . . . they only flourish in an atmosphere of ignorance and apathy." Popular apathy to religion is obvious enough. But Christians deceive themselves if they imagine that this apathy is due to ignorance. We certainly deplore popular unacquaintance with a thousand useful truths, the knowledge of which might end war, disease and destitution. But ignorance of religion is impossible. Even a school-child is taught something of history and too much of religion. Many of them have suffered from religious teaching.

Being something of a Modernist, Dr. Soper thinks (p. 99) "No one says to-day that the thunder is God's voice raised in anger or rebuke." Dr. Soper might in former days have been martyred for such mild scepticism. Dr. Soper's Bible teaches this silly belief which Dr. Soper says is unanimously rejected to-day. Had there been no "infidels" raising what the Sopers of that day would have called "Aunt Sallies," Dr. Soper would still be believing (2Samuel xxii. 14: "The Lord thundered from heaven and the Most High uttered His voice . . . lightning, and discomfited them."

Many of Dr. Soper's critics are Labour men, and he fails to answer the objection that "trade unions have done more for the working man than all the prayers." He indeed agrees (p. 27) that this argument "is striking at the fundamental thing in our religion." It is no answer to claim rather clumsily that "the first Trade Unionist was a Methodist local preacher and his prayers had a lot to do with his activities." If that were true, it would merely add force to the deduction that the prayers of the entire Christian world—except of half a dozen Methodists—"had a lot to do with" the persecution and intolerance and other "activities" of the Christian opponents of Trade Unionism.

We have never heard a single Freethinking Socialist who wished to belittle the Tolpuddle Unionists, who in 1834 were sentenced to the abominable injustice of seven years' transportation for no other "crime" than that they joined their fellow workers to "agitate" for better labour conditions. It is impossible to name the FIRST trade-unionist. It only suggests the narrowest sort of reckless sectarianism to call one of these brave high-principled Tolpuddle fighters the FIRST trade unionist."

The Webbs' *History of Trade Unionism*, says that "strikes" in the present significance of the term date back to the fourteenth century or earlier. The WORD "strike" occurs in the official *Annual Register* in 1768, according to the Oxford Dictionary. Who can say who began the tremendous struggles of the early unions against the Conspiracy Laws? "Riotous and tumultuous clubs and societies" (as they were called) existed in the Woolcombers and Weavers industry in 1717. A special Act was passed in 1743, to strengthen the earlier anti-trade union laws. In 1799 William Pitt's ministry passed a drastic "Act to Prevent Unlawful Combinations amongst Journeymen to Raise Wages." The Webbs tell of the Woollen Weavers of Wiltshire and Somerset combining in 1726. In 1818 a number of Cotton-spinners were sent to two years imprisonment for "conspiracy."

There have been, of course, Jewish and other religious people in various trade unions. The Roman Catholic Weavers have even had separate unions from their fellow-workers—and have proved how reactionary religionists can be in industrial organizations. Marx, Engels, Morris, Owen, Holyoake, Hyndman, are a small fraction of the names which leap to the eye when one thinks of the Freethinkers who have stood out in the Labour movement. Without Francis Place, all good causes for the redress of working-class conditions must have suffered a serious loss. He too was an Atheist. And if one would read of what the masses of religious professors have done to retard such progress, read Thorold Rogers; and Chapman Cohen's *Christianity, Slavery and Labour.*

We will content ourselves with one more comment. We sympathize with Dr. Soper in his warfare against many of his own church and creed. He says, "I have no heart for a vigorous defence of the Church as it is" (p. 32). Dr. Soper, like many another modern Christian knows that Churches exist to propagate creeds in which no intelligent man can now believe. Why then remain in such Churches?

George Bedborough.

God's Book

Christian: "I have never given the matter serious consideration, but it seems to me that the Christian religion is the only true one."

Sceptic: "To which of its numerous branches do you refer?"

C.: "I have been reared in the Church of England, and am naturally biassed in favour of its teaching."

S.: "Why have you not seriously studied your religion?"

C.: "My education having been to some extent neglected, I am content to follow the lead of the clergy, learned men who have devoted their lives to a profound study of the subject. I think you will admit that they would not deliberately mislead their flocks."

S.: "Their habitual insistence upon the truth of the discredited Christian dogmas forces me to the belief that many do not honestly believe much of what they teach. You must remember that their livelihood depends upon their dissemination of what is known as the Gospel. It does not need a superior education to grapple with the intricacies of the Christian religion. Anyone with an ordinary education and average intelligence is capable of doing so. All that is necessary is an unprejudiced study of the Bible, standard Christian literature, and heterodox works by such writers as Chapman Cohen, Joseph McCabe, Vivian Phelips, Ingersoll, Paine, J. M. Robertson, and others. Unless familiar with these latter one's knowledge of the subject is sadly incomplete. I speak from personal experience."

C.: "I can only repeat that I am content to leave the matter to the clergy, who assure us solemnly that the Bible is the divinely inspired word of God, and that we cannot be saved from eternal torture unless we follow its injunctions. If it is not divinely inspired, how do you account for its being the most extensively read book in the world? Are you not aware that it is the world's best seller?"

S.: "I admit that it is the best seller, a fact which is not surprising when we consider the resources, and the methods employed by those responsible for its sale and distribution, but I challenge your assertion that it is the most widely read. In the vast majority of cases it is treated by its owner as a household ornament, or mascot, and once placed in its resting place, an operation speedily effected, it is rarely again opened. Do *you* ever read yours?"

C.: "I confess I do not."

S.: "Then perhaps you will not object if I give you a few of my impressions of it. In the first place nobody knows when or by whom it was written. We know, however, that it was compiled by human beings who were lamentably ignorant of science, and of many of the things that are common knowledge today. To say that it is divinely inspired is sheer stupidity. It gives a grossly inaccurate account of the creation as scientists have proved beyond a doubt. It says that a snake walked and talked in a garden, that it tempted Eve to induce Adam to eat an apple, and that it was on that account the human race was doomed, and that finally a comparatively small number was saved through Jesus dying for them. A silly, impossible and wicked story! It describes a universal deluge, and the saving of a certain number of human and other beings from its effects, an incident which, upon reflection, cannot be considered other than an impossibility. It states that a whale swallowed Jonah, and subsequently discharged him none the worse for his experience, a tale which now excites general ridicule. It says that the confusion of tongues arose during the building of the Tower of Babel, 4,000 years ago, although we know that human languages were dispersed over the earth long before that time. It says that Joshua made the sun stand still to enable a day to be lengthened. We know now that had the sun stopped it would not have lengthened the day. It says that Balaam's ass spoke. Do *you* believe it? It mentions, as a matter of fact, the existence of cockatrices, unicorns, satyrs, dragons, flying fiery serpents, and witches, although there are no such things, and never were. It says that men once attained the age of several hundred years. Medicine and Anthropology support the view that the duration of human life has been much the same at all periods of the world's history. It says that Christ was born of a virgin by the Holy Ghost, and that he ascended to Heaven, but it does not furnish a particle of trustworthy evidence in support of either tale. It says that the Devil took Jesus to the top of a mountain, and promised him the world if he would worship him. Is it possible, even for a child, to believe this nonsense? It says that Jesus descended into the lower parts of the earth, and that he preached unto the spirits in prison. Upon this authority, and the Apocryphal Gospel of Nicodemus, your Church accepts, and compels its clergy to preach, the fantastic doctrine of Jesus' descent into Hell! It says the meek shall inherit the earth, whereas the reverse is the truth. It says that all things asked for will be granted. Your own personal experience must have convinced you of the falsity of this promise. It announces, in no uncertain tone—nearly 2,000 years ago—the then impending end of the world! It says that people were possessed of devils, and that Christ cured a sick man by casting out the devils within him, and that they entered the bodies of swine which ran madly into the sea, and were drowned. It is pathetic to know that many apparently sane people still believe this appalling stuff. It says that Christ performed many miracles, including raising people from the dead, an allegation denied by science. It teems with unfilled prophecies, broken promises, impossibilities, indecencies, absurdities and self-contradictions. If a secular work nowadays contained one-fifth of the latter, to say nothing of the other objectionable features, it would be spurned by all intelligent people. And these are merely a few typical examples of the material upon which your religion is founded!"

C.: "You appear to have overlooked the unique ethical aspect of Christianity."

S.: "I fail to see anything unique in it. The ethics of all religions are very much alike; and are due more to the reasoned thinking of intellectual men than to the religions themselves. Their foundation is to be found in the Golden Rule, traceable to a time long anterior to the Christian era."

Pro Reason.

Christianity is a virus that, when once injected into the cerebral blood-stream of man, deprives him of all sense of the glory of life.—*Llewelyn Powys.*

Correspondence

A QUESTION OF ACCURACY

To the Editor of the "Freethinker"

Sir,—The policy of accuracy which you are instigating, leads me to hope that this will bear fruit in more directions than one. As you have been guilty of inaccuracy when referring in your issue of Sunday last to the policy of this Society I would point out the following:—

We have always denied the April date.

We have always referred to your Congress as "The International Conference of Freethinkers."

We have never assured our supporters that Atheism is dead. Why such a statement should reap any financial reward for our funds, is only understood by such intelligent people as yourself. One would have thought such a statement would have had the effect of closing down a Society which exists for the sole purpose of opposing anti-Christian teaching. The Letter of mine to the *Times*, quoted by you had, "which it has been stated is to be held in London in April this year," the reference to "propaganda which has been for a number of years waged in secret," did not refer to that of your Society, but in the interests of your new campaign for accuracy, would you be prepared to swear that such has not been in existence?

Frederick H. E. Harfitt.

(*Secretary* Christion Evidence Society).

[(1) We have ourselves heard many times from C.E.S. platforms the assurance that Atheism was dead, backed up by lists of names as evidence. We did not say that it was ever put forth as an official statement.

(2) We know of no officially arranged campaign of secrecy with regard to Freethought propaganda. That in many instances Freethinkers disseminate their views quietly, is true. But the responsibility for this rests with the Christian habit of persecution. If the C.E.S. is against this it should denounce the boycott of Freethinkers by Christians in whatever form it exists. Where people have to pay for open speech—some amount of "secrecy" is inevitable.—Editor.]

RUSSIA AND THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE

Sir,—I gather Mr. Lindsay has not read the book I mentioned, and in any case does not believe it.

I dare to mention Mr. William Henry Chamberlin in Russia eleven years. Both Mr. Eugène Lyons and Mr. W. H. Chamberlin express themselves as finally utterly disgusted by the absolute disregard for human life, individually and in bulk, in post-war Russia.

May I give a quotation: "Everything, the very lives of whole classes of the population, the patterns of daily life, *the character of art and literature*, was inextricably bound up with the merciless driving through of these policies, regardless of the human cost involved."

To reasonable men the value of success of the Russian experiments depends on this actual question, is human life of small value in Russia, or not?

> Since leaving Russia, I have occasionally yielded to the temptation, to write harsh and controversial things, about the type of Left Wing intellectual, especially common in America and England, who sees everything wrong in the rest of the world, and nothing wrong, even in the face of the most overwhelming evidence, in the Soviet Union. Yet having passed through this disease myself, I should realize that it is seldom cured by argument, direct contact with Soviet realities over a long enough period is probably the sole effective way to make possible a balanced judgment. I recall how for months I cherished a personal grudge against Bertrand Russell, who thinking he was a Communist, went to Russia with the British Labour delegation in 1920, and who left the country sure that he was not. (*My Russian Education.*)

This letter is longer than I care to write already, but may I be allowed to reply to Mr. Lindsay's remarks about me.

I do not want denigration of anything; I never heard the word before. I like to know the truth about things.

I do not, nor ever will, allow the right of anyone, or of any group or society, to destroy, or to take one human life, neither Stalin, nor Hitler, nor what is commonly known as Justice, in this country or any other.

My opinion on Russia, being heresay, is worth just nothing. In my letter, I asked a fair question. May I ask a second? How many people have been executed in Russia during the last ten years?

W. L. English.

P.S.—I submitted the book by Eugene Lyons (since I wrote the above letter), to a sincere friend who is an authority on pre-War Russia. My friend criticizes the book, in that the good that has been accomplished by the Revolution has not been acknowledged. Mr. Lyons had apparently not considered the condition of pre-War Russia, and is in effect comparing the New Russia, with the United States of America. Which is, of course, absurd.

MEATLESS MEALS

Sir,—Having noticed an advertisement from the Manchester Vegetarian Society in this weeks *Freethinker*, I should like, as a customer for many years, to testify to the excellence of the goods supplied by the Society.

Many of my Freethinking friends are vegetarians, and an experience of thirty years has convinced me that a meatless diet is the best.

Edgar Syers.

Obituary

Frederick Tarry

We regret to announce the death of Frederick Tarry of Derby, which took place on February 16, after a long and painful illness, and at the early age of forty-three years. He was a member of the late Derby Branch of the N.S.S., and won the esteem of his fellow members by his enthusiasm and staunch adherence to his Freethought principles. In the midst of his suffering clerical attempts to interfere with his Freethought were miserable failures, and he retained his principles until the end. He leaves a wife and two young daughters, to whom we extend sincere condolence. The funeral took place on Monday, February 21, in Nottingham Road Cemetery, Derby, where before a large assembly of relatives and friends a Secular Service was conducted at the graveside by Mr. R. H. Rosetti.

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

Kingston-on-Thames Branch N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Saturday night and Sunday night, Mr. J. W. Barker will speak at each meeting.

North London Branch N.S.S. (White Stone Pond- Hampstead): 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.0, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury.

West London Branch N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Tuson and Miss E. Millard, M.A.

INDOOR

South London Branch (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.): 7.30, Mr. H. Beddington (Author of 'France States," Psychic Healing, etc.)—"The Basis of Psychic Phenomena."

West London Branch N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Allan Flanders—"Freethought and Socialism To-day."

COUNTRY

INDOOR.

Birkenhead (Wirral) Branch N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, F. G. Stevens (President Birkenhead Branch N.S.S.)—"Tolerance."

(*Continued on page* 159)

(*Continued from page* 158)

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street, Schools), 7.0, Miss M. E. March—"My Visit to the Crimea."

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Kirkgate): 7.15, Miss J. Martin—"Politics and the Contemporary Writers."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—A Lecture.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Freegardeners' Hall, Picardy Place): 7.0, Councillor White (Paisley)—"Secularism and Socialism."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, T. L. Macdonald, M.A., B.Ss., F.R.S.E.—"Astrology: 'The Survival of a Superstition.'"

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Shepherd's Hall, Regent Street): 7.0, J. Harrison Maxwell, M.A., F.S.A., Scot—"In Search of the Past." Keil Cave, Kintyre.

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Fifty-Seventh Anniversary of the Opening of the Secular Hall: Chapman Cohen (President, National Secular Society).

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, W. A. Atkinson (Manchester)—"Religion and the Modern World."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. ("King's Café," Oxford Road): 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton (Burnley)—"The Secret of all the Healing Cults."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.30, Mr. G. H. Dalkin (Stockton)—"The Goodness of God."

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