

# THE FOLLY OF ISOLATION

# THE FREETHINKER

EDITED by CHAPMAN COHEN

— Founded 1881 —

VOL. LVIII.—No. 15

SUNDAY, APRIL 10, 1938

PRICE THREEPENCE

## PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

|  | Page |
|--|------|
| The Folly of Isolation—The Editor - - -            | 225  |
| The Foundation of Faith—Mimnermus - - -            | 227  |
| "By Thy Sorceries . . ."—C. Bradlaugh Bonner - - - | 228  |
| Jesus Goes "Left"—George Bedborough - - -          | 229  |
| Wilkes and Christianity—Jack Lindsay - - -         | 230  |
| One Sunday Evening—T. H. Elstob - - -              | 234  |
| The Gentle Art of Lying—H. Cutner - - -            | 235  |
| Satanic Soliloquy—P. E. Cleator - - -              | 237  |

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

## Views and Opinions

### The Folly of Isolation

In the political world of to-day we hear a great deal of a policy of Isolation, versus one of Collective action. The former has been boosted by the Beaverbrook Press, not because Lord Beaverbrook is a man of original ideas or is capable of profound thinking, but simply because the aim of certain papers is to get hold of a stunt they can call their own and convert it into a slogan. Then if the slogan matures and happens to be successful, the next step is to claim "We did it." If it does not succeed it is dropped and there is an end to it. In this game the yellow press can depend upon the unintelligence of the bulk of its readers not remembering to-day what they read yesterday, and *understanding* neither yesterday nor to-day. If the readers of the yellow press—even the majority of them—had the slightest appreciation of the meaning of evolution, or of the nature of the social structure, men of the Beaverbrook type would be relegated to the management of a general store—and kept there.

Lord Samuel once said that he found his way into politics through philosophy, and he is one of the few men in the House of Commons capable of taking a philosophic view of life. In the case we have under consideration I think the whole question capable of being lifted out of politics—a field of action which Meredith likened to climbing the greasy pole, because it was a case of "mutton or no mutton you get the grease"—and discussed from the point of view of social philosophy. We must commence by dealing with a phrase, because, as is usual, the unthinking are bludgeoned with a slogan, which pleases the ear without agitating the brain.

\* \* \*

### Mind your own Business

In this particular case we have the constantly repeated phrase "Britain must mind her own business," or "We must mind our own business." Both excellent expressions, if one is only quite sure what

they mean, and that the meaning is in accord with the facts. What is meant by minding one's own business? When can we make sure that instead of minding our own business we are not neglecting its most vital aspects? A man living on a desert island might reasonably say that his business consists in acting without considering anyone else, for the plain reason that there is no one else to be considered. But if one fine day a dozen or so other people landed on the island and began "to do things" the situation would undergo a complete transformation. Or if, by exchanging cocoa-nuts for mealies, he had established some kind of intercourse with the inhabitants of another island, his "own business" would mean either keeping on good terms with or guarding against, these other people. From that position to the position of the modern world where there exists an interchange of ideas and products and a clashing of rival beliefs and theories we have a continuous process, the outstanding feature of which is the greater entanglement of "my business" with "your business." We all become implicated in each other's ideas and mode of living. We cannot say that we really stand apart from the brigandage and brutality of Mussolini and Hitler, because we have to note their doings and our policy has to be shaped with reference to them in terms of either approval or abhorrence. We cannot really say that how the people in this country live or that how parents bring up children is no one's business but their own. We are all concerned with each other; it is really everybody's business how everybody behaves, and although it is a question of how far individual inclinations may be left freely to express themselves, it is nonsense to say that each one can go along minding his own business, in the stupid flat-catching sense of the Beaverbrook Press. I think I can show that the question of "minding our own business"—as put—is almost unbelievably foolish. The choice does not lie between that and collective action, *the actual and only possible choice is between collective action for evil and collective action for good.* The man who thinks otherwise has not grasped the a.b.c. of an evolutionary sociology.

\* \* \*

### Man and his Fellows

I commence with the statement that man is a gregarious animal. That is quite a commonplace, so much of a commonplace that I put it in another form: Man is an expanding animal. He develops by expansion; and the only field in which he can expand is the social field, and the social field is all that comes within the sphere of his influence or all that is capable of influencing him. Man increases in strength and wisdom and efficiency as his interests and his associations cover a wider and wider area.

To take the simpler form first. It is quite clear that all feeling must be centred in an individual. Whatever feeling I have about anything must be *mine* in a

sense in which other things cannot be said to be mine. A purse, a chair, a pipe, may be mine, or yours, or "may be slave to thousands." But my feelings and my ideas must be mine in a very special sense. I can possess these in common with other individuals, but this is only by our arousing in others kindred ideas and feelings. The common distinction between the selfish and the unselfish offers no contradiction to what has been said; the distinction here is that the feelings of the selfish man take little regard of the welfare of others, while the "field" of the unselfish man includes others. That is the way, the only way, of social evolution. It is made possible by the circle of interests enlarging, just as the development of the animal body is made possible by a differentiation of function which is wholly dependent upon the collective action of the different parts. That this is largely ignored in Parliament and in the popular press is due to the fact that so many of our "leaders" are still in the kindergarten stage of mental development. But this being granted it is evident that the choice before the world is not that of Isolation versus Collective Action, whether viewed from the broad ground of general culture or the restricted field of politics. We cannot be isolated if we would. We must act collectively for either good or evil.

\* \* \*

#### A Plain Issue

Now consider the existing world-situation. Our business, it is said by the interested press-caterers to the ignorant and the fearful, is not with what Germany does, or Italy does, or Japan does; we must "mind our own business." But we must go on arming, and arming and still again arming. Why? Because we must be prepared for Germany attacking us, or Italy threatening our Eastern possessions, or cutting the life-line of the Empire, or menacing British interests in the East and elsewhere. But in the name of all that is sensible, what are all these actions—I am not questioning their necessity—but busying ourselves with what other nations do, and extending the field of "our own business" to include *their* business? And is not the ground of *their* action based on the alleged necessity for their taking an interest in our business? Further, when we make alliances with this and that nation against other alliances formed by other nations against us, are we not so mingling the business of the world that it would puzzle the crooked ingenuity of a Cabinet Minister or a newspaper proprietor to say where our business ends, and that of the other fellow begins?

To-day we have collective action established on a larger scale than it has ever before existed. But it is collective action for war, not for peace; for destruction, not for construction. And will anyone tell me the difference between collective action for war and collective action for peace? We must engage in one or the other. And even if we indulge in what the foolish or vicious call "isolation" we are still acting collectively. For those who talk in this way insist that in order to act in isolation we must go on building more ships and making more guns and planes until the whole world sinks into chaos through sheer exhaustion, which means that we will die collectively because we decline to live collectively. Again, will anyone tell me the difference between this and collective action? Obviously, if we follow the present policy, we are doing so in order that we may accommodate ourselves to what Germany or Italy (the Prime Minister's dictum that we are not thinking of Italy is just nonsense) is doing. We are not acting in isolation, we are acting in concert with Germany and Italy, just as two chess players are acting together even though it is the aim of each to sweep the

other off the board. Once more it is a case of collective action for good or for evil.

I know that those who talk about isolation say they mean to enlarge it so as to include the collection of peoples that form the British Empire. But that only alters the terms of the proposition without changing its significance. For to maintain the Empire we must guard the communications between the different parts. We must guard the Mediterranean against Italy, and we must protect our interests in the East against the ambitions of Mussolini. Once more our actions are being determined by what other nations do; their actions are determined by what we do. We are not acting in isolation; each nation does not consider itself as an isolated unit but one of a company of nations. And the collective fact is at present masked by lying and cheating, and false promises and protestations that do not even mislead because their real quality has been so often exhibited. Mr. Chamberlain knows that Italy is arming against Britain, as Mussolini knows Britain is arming against Italy. Again the choice is collective action for evil or for good, for civilization or for savagery.

\* \* \*

#### The way of Evolution

I am not, I must again say, taking sides in either politics or economics. What I have said applies with equal cogency, whether one is dealing with a democracy, with an autocracy, with Fascism, with Communism, or with any other form of government. I am merely emphasizing a basic truth of social evolution. And this is the fact that social evolution is one long lesson of collective action. It is also a history of expansion. In social evolution there is very little that is fundamentally new, there is mainly, if not entirely, an expansion of existing qualities. Feelings which man inherits from the animal world, become enlarged in the family, in the tribe, in the nation, in the world of human societies. Nature never creates anything that is entirely new—it always works over and over again existing forces in terms of new and enlarged combinations. That is why the primitive tribalism that is figuring so largely in such countries as Germany and Italy is equal to the return of the domesticated animal to the wild. It is like the dog going back to the wolf, or the cultivated rose going back to the wild rose. Nationalism did once represent an advance, because it brought into a conscious unity a number of tribes that were formerly at loggerheads. To-day, the future, if it is to be a future of progressive culture, lies with an internationalism that will make itself the conscious servant of an enlightened humanism. Everything that is best in life belongs to this field. Art, science, music, philosophy, literature, all these are international—no, not international, that phrase savours too much of a conscious tribalism—they are things that soar above the barriers of race or creed, or party, or nation, except in that present haunt of the beast, Germany, and the fruits of German policy are already to be seen in the growing moral and intellectual degradation of the German people.

I have, I repeat, been trying to set down a lesson in the fundamental fact of social development. Humanity, because of its methods of communication, intellectual and material, must be considered as a whole. We cannot act alone, no matter what we may imagine. We cannot practise "isolation" despite what the knaves and fools of the yellow press tell us. The action of each must be based upon the conduct of those with whom we come into contact, whether the others are those living in the same street, the same town, or in the same world of exchanging communications. It is the conduct of each that determines the

conduct of all; it is the conduct of all that determines the conduct of each. The problem before the world is not really so difficult to work out—if only the fools and the rogues could be silent for awhile and leave it to men of good intent and intelligence to essay the task.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

## The Foundation of Faith

"Only on paper has humanity yet achieved glory, beauty, truth, knowledge, virtue, and abiding love."

Bernard Shaw.

"History moves fast in these days."

*The Star* (London).

THE foundation of faith is built on popular ignorance. In the Ages of Belief the population was almost entirely illiterate. As late as 1870, the State had to take a hand, and compulsory national education was introduced. Despite three generations of State control of education, it has not yet succeeded in producing an educated population. Present-day national education is far too much under the influence of clericalism. Science is neglected, and credulity fostered. It has been entirely ineffective in the suppression of many little superstitions. It has been impotent to remove from the minds of the present generation ignorant beliefs that used to prevail in by-gone ages. For some of these, such as the spilling of salt, and the quaint notion that Friday is a day of ill-luck and misfortune, the origin can be traced to remote times, but for others, which still flourish in different parts of the country, it is difficult to suggest the explanation, except on the ground of a blind credulity and defective education.

The foolish superstition that the number thirteen has unlucky associations still prevails in this country, although England is supposed to be civilized. Why should this number "thirteen" be regarded as unlucky? There is, of course, no logical explanation for the superstition. The idea is the purest fantasy, but that misfortune will befall a person if he is at a dinner which comprises thirteen guests, or if he lives in a house which bears that number, is a silly superstition so widely believed that it has to be considered. So prevalent is the idea that in an hotel or a passenger boat you will rarely find a room numbered thirteen.

In recent times efforts have been made to combat the superstition by forming "Thirteen Clubs," the members of which are pledged to do the things which credulous folks regard as harmful or hazardous. These clubs, however, do not affect seriously the prevalence of the superstition.

The wearing of charms is another very common form of delusion, and the most unlikely people have been known to cherish such toys. Under our boasted veneer of civilization there is a huge mass of sheer, unadulterated ignorance which is a bad heritage from a barbarous and credulous past. This dark underworld, with all its foolish fancies and stupid superstitions, exists in London, Manchester, Liverpool, and other towns and villages of to-day just as it existed everywhere in the Middle Ages. While it belongs chiefly to the working classes, it is by no means confined to them, for charms are bought as eagerly in the West-End as in the East-End of London. Indeed, they are made of gold, platinum, and silver, as well as cheaper metals. The superstition survives; motor-cars have their mascots no less than aeroplanes. Credulity shows itself in so many ways. Well-known

manufacturers continue to make huge fortunes by selling medicines which profess to cure nearly all the ills that flesh is heir too, and quack doctors are as numerous as ever.

Sailors are unusually superstitious. Many modern sailors, like the ancient mariners, believe that a child's caul is a charm against drowning. During the submarine peril of the Great War the price for this charm rose from thirty shillings to three pounds, and even more. Immediately after the war an exhibition was held in London consisting almost entirely of charms, "sacred" emblems, amulets, and other curious objects, worn by soldiers, sailors, and civilians to avert death, ward off disease, and bring good fortune. There were many hundreds of exhibits, the whole forming a most ironic criticism of our civilization, and throwing a searchlight upon some curious psychological problems.

In the mean streets of the great towns the ignorance is appalling. Gipsies, who hawk goods from door to door, make more money by telling fortunes than by selling articles. So prevalent is this reliance on fortune-telling that the so-called "national" newspapers pander to this weakness, and publish horoscopes and other rubbish. There are hordes of "electors" who know nothing whatever of politics, and cannot distinguish between the claims of Conservatives and Socialists, Communists and Liberals. Yet all these unfortunate people have had the benefit of unlimited Christian influence, and the advantages of State education.

The gulf between the civilized and the uncivilized in the nation is not so wide that it cannot be bridged. It is largely a matter of self-reliance; too many people suffer from an inferiority complex.

The savage, subjected to a mean superstition, is afraid to walk simply about the world. He cannot do this because it is ominous, he must do that because it is lucky. Is not the parallel between the savage and the uncivilized man in our towns and villages complete? What is needed in our education is initiative and not stereotype. Pupils are taught to look to the clergy for guidance, yet the priests themselves are uncivilized. It is a case of the blind leading the sightless. We shall never be a civilized nation until we get rid of the clergy in education, for the simple reason that priests live by retailing barbarism.

The unpalatable truth is that the vast majority of our population is not even half-educated, despite two thousand years of Christian teaching, and six decades of State education. Owing to priestly influence; real education is retarded. Millions are spent annually on education, but far too much is expended on costly buildings, expensive equipment, and bureaucratic machinery. The one who receives the least consideration is the child—the future citizen. It almost seems as if the authorities do not desire a really educated democracy. Classes are far too large; the school-leaving age should be raised; holidays are too lengthy. Paradoxical as it may sound, there is far more sense of real education in the Boy-Scout Movement, with all its limitations, than in all the elaborate circumlocution of misdirected effort in State education. Some attempt is made to impress the young scout with a sense of self-respect and self-reliance, which is more than can be said for the pupil in a State school.

The strength of Priestcraft, the world over, lies in the unthinking and uninformed multitudes. And Christian priests do not differ so much from their coloured prototypes in barbarous countries. The Christian religion battens upon sheer ignorance. In the vast majority of instances, the Christian is a man who does not understand his own Oriental faith, who does not even know what he himself believes or dis-

believes, and has never given a solitary hour's thought to his own or any other religion. Although the clergy never admit it, the Christian religion actually represents the lowest culture in modern society. Based on Oriental fables, supported by dead men's money, trading on ignorance, the clergy at long last find the conscience of the race slowly rising in revolt against their vested interest and antiquated ideals. Theology has long enough darkened the earth, and separated man from man. A new impulse is at hand to make men join hands and hearts. This impulse is Secularism, which embraces the whole world in an ethical fraternity, and points the way to future greatness.

MIMNERMUS.

### "By Thy Sorceries . . ."

"ŒCUMENICAL" is the word, ladies and gentlemen. Would you like a definition? It comes from a Greek word meaning "the inhabited earth," and it signifies "general, universal, catholic, world-wide," and it is used of "certain councils composed of representatives from the whole of Christendom." Specifically the Œcumenical Synod was the parliament of the Roman Catholic Church, and it and the Pope were supposed to govern the *inhabited earth*. When there were two popes, the Œcumenical Synod alone was held by some to incorporate the supreme power. After the Synod of Trent, which sat from 1545 to 1563, the Popes did without this parliament and ruled despotically for 300 years.

In 1864, however, Pope Pius IX. asked such of the Cardinals as dwelled in Rome, whether he would not do well to convene the Œcumenical Synod. This enquiry he followed up with another feeler when all the Catholic Bishops were assembled in Rome to celebrate a centenary of St. Peter.

Finally he convened the Synod by the bull *Œterni Patris* on June 29, 1868. Such an act, after three centuries without any such council, caused a stir throughout the inhabited world. The excitement was increased by the mystery of it, for it was not till February, 1869, that any inkling was given of the reason for its convention. It was to declare the Infallibility of the Pope.

It must be clearly understood that up till then the Pope had not officially been infallible. In theory he should have taken the advice of his council. This he had not done for three long centuries. Evidently it had been found in practice that the Pope was infallible, and, equally evidently, after so long a test of his infallibility, it was high time that his infallibility should be made official.

This was not done without some opposition, which suggests that there were some bishops who had a doubt. The Synod met on December 8, 1869, and continued their deliberations through the year 1870 to October 20, when the Pope prorogued it by the bull *Postquam Dei Munere*. The papal state at this time collapsed and was incorporated into the kingdom of Italy.

Not only did this Synod, known as the Vatican Council, declare that the Pope was infallible, which meant that he need never call another meeting of the Synod, but they also affirmed that in all lands the Church is superior to the State.

I would ask my readers to consider what were the implications of these two declarations. The Pope by these had "complete and supreme jurisdictionary authority over the whole church, not simply in matters of faith and morality, but also in matters

touching the discipline and governance of the Church; and this authority is a regular and immediate authority, extending over each and every Church and over each and every pastor and believer." (Sessio iv., cap. 3, fin., *Mirbt., Quellen*, cited by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*).

No secular government could remain indifferent before these declarations. If they were wholly accepted, the secular government would be subordinate to the ordinances of the Roman Pope. We are not now concerned with the immediate effects of those pronouncements, but with more remote results. The Pope was empowered to control utterly the intellectual and spiritual life of all believers. He has exercised this control in more than one way. The extent to which he has succeeded in enforcing this control has depended on the degree of servile belief among the faithful. It must be borne in mind always in dealing with papal utterances that here is a power which claims the right to direct some of, or all, the inhabitants of every country under the sun, a power which every secular government must regard as a "foreign power" mapping out the way they should go for the subjects of that secular government.

It may be objected that such direction as may come from the Papacy will be spiritual and moral (whatever may be meant by those words).

The next word, ladies and gentlemen, is "encyclical." Again, a definition? From a Greek word meaning a "ring" or "circle," it signifies "sent about to many places or persons," especially it is applied to "a letter from the Pope to the Bishops or to the Church at large."

At irregular intervals the Holy Father indites to his Venerable Brethren, the Bishops, letters of counsel. Emanating as they do from a source which has been officially recognized, as recently as 68 years ago, as infallible, these letters are of the utmost importance. When and where they touch on politics, their importance is not limited to believers, but to all in every state, since the Church of Rome is supreme over the State in all lands.

In 1891, Pope Leo XIII. addressed an Encyclical to the Church, which is known from its opening phrase as "*Rerum Novarum*" (of new things). The edition published by the Catholic Social Guild is termed "*The Workers' Charter*." In this circular it is postulated that "no practical solution" of the Social Problem "will be found apart from the intervention of Religion and the Church." That implies that Politics, of which it is the aim and duty to solve social problems practically, are in the domain of Religion and the Church. It is to be noted also that the Church "uses her efforts not only to enlighten the mind, but to direct by her precepts the life and conduct of *each and all*."

Forty years later Pope Pius XI. issued an encyclical called for that reason "*Quadragesimo Anno*," in which he tells us that the *Rerum Novarum* "taught mankind new methods of dealing with social problems," and "boldly attacked and overthrew the idols of liberalism," "the tottering tenets of liberalism, which had long hampered effective interference by the Government," liberalism, which is "the parent of cultural Socialism," whose "offspring will be Bolshevism."

Infallibly the Pope has demonstrated in these two circulars that Rome is opposed to Liberalism, to Socialism and to "Bolshevism." Since the Church is supreme in the land, it is the duty of every good Catholic to do whatever comes to his hand to overthrow these three.

In the *Times* of January 7, 1938, the writer of an article on Paraguay states: "In Paraguay, as in other South American countries, Communism is con-

sidered not merely as an extremist political and economic doctrine, but as a form of moral turpitude far worse than political venality. This is due to the spiritual influence of the Roman Catholic Church. . . . The accusation of sympathy with Communism is a simple and easy means of discrediting a political opponent, and much more effective than a mere allegation of incompetence or dishonesty."

Pope Leo XIII. had defined Communism as "the fatal plague which insinuates itself into the very marrow of human society only to bring about its ruin." (Encyclical *Quod apostolici muneris*.) It is not surprising to discover that, when in 1918, the Russian Soviet Government separated Church and State, as had already been done in France and Portugal, and secularized education, the Roman Church was ready to come to the help of its ancient foe the Orthodox Church. Patriarch Tikhon had accepted office under the new Russian Government, yet he publicly cursed it and those who upheld it, and gave orders to his priests to do their utmost to aid its enemies. The help given by the Church of Rome has been evident in all lands, for it is now almost impossible to gain an accurate view of what is happening or has happened in the U.S.S.R. on account of the fog of misrepresentation raised by the combined churches.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

(To be concluded)

### Jesus Goes "Left"

THOSE who saw the film "The Ghost Goes West," must have enjoyed the humour of a situation in which the particularly Scottish Family Ghost is transplanted to a typically "Western" environment. We imagine that most Christians as well as sensible non-Christians will smile (or frown) at the curious attempts of Left Book Club promoters to show "our Jesus" installed as a full-blown Communist.

Let us be quite clear. We see no reason whatever for criticizing Left Wingers, Vegetarians, or Major Douglasites who endeavour to make converts—be the converts Reds or Whites or Greens. Mormons never join "outside" or "gentile" organizations. It's a pity. To mingle with "gentiles" for special social secular objects would do them a world of good. We are only too glad when men like the Rev. Stuart Headlam, the Rev. Canon Percy Dearmer, and perhaps the present Dean of Chichester, are not ashamed to associate with men of all religions and none, for the accomplishment of worthy social ends, or indeed of any humanitarian aims which seek no narrow purpose, especially unpopular ones from which they expect no personal or sectarian glory.

But we cannot believe that any good cause is served by attempting to proclaim that a purely secular aim is really a religious one, and that a great name which has for many centuries stood for enmity to secular social amelioration is actually that of a socialistic revolutionary propagandist.

In the Preface to the Left Book Club publication *Christianity and the Social Revolution*, the object of its issue by the L.B.C. is shown to be:—

The Church is in the same position as Liberalism. . . . The extinction of both can only be averted by their making terms with Socialism.

and the editor of the L.B.C. edition appeals "for a closing of the ranks and a new spirit of tolerance and comradeship between Christians and Socialists in the face of a common enemy."

This "common enemy" business is a little too "thick." If it means that a successful English Communist revolution would continue giving privileges to Christian Churches we cannot see how such "revolu-

tionaries" could claim to follow Karl Marx and his successors. A frank avowal that a Communist revolution will terminate every form of religious privilege would instantly settle the policy of every Christian Church.

As far as individual Christians are concerned it is difficult to understand the mentality of those who appeal to Christians, as *Christians*, to help the Left Wingers. Can we believe that it is a threat? Is it conceivable that the "Left" party purposes an act of grave injustice, but can be bought off by Christians joining up with the "Left"?

Quotations from Bishop Gore, Canon Barry and others who never have dreamt of associating themselves with the Left, leave us cold. Bishop Gore—like many individual Christians may have been shocked that Churches neglect their charitable duties. We go so far as to believe that Bishop Gore was better than the specific quotation attributed to him in this book makes him appear to be when he concludes:—

The penitence (of the Church for its long failure to champion the oppressed and weak) must lead to reparation while there is yet time, ere the well-merited judgments of God take all weapons of social influence out of our hands.

Do the "Lefts" promise to LEAVE these "weapons" in the hands of an amenable church?

We are admirers of the social spirit shown by the Rev. Conrad Noel. But we cannot conceive a greater travesty of the Bible Jesus than his Chapter in this book entitled "Jesus." He wriggles out of the obvious dilemma that his Jesus—a Communist like himself—could declare "Blessed are ye poor," and "the poor ye have always with you." In Mr. Noel's opinion, "this world and the next" should read, "this epoch of usury and exploitation—and the age to come" (presumably the day after the Communist revolution)!

There is, as we saw in the last paragraph, very drastic "editing" of the Jesus who has to fit into twentieth century dialectical Materialism and Marxist Leninism. "Blessed are the poor," and "the meek" have to be re-written by Mr. Noel: "the *spirited* poor." In fact very ingeniously Mr. Noel "proves" that Jesus came "not to destroy but to fulfil" the law of Moses. And few of us can have ever regarded Moses as deserving the title he gave himself as "the meekest of men."

The "scream" of the chapter is Mr. Noel's entertaining "paraphrase" of an incident in the life of Moses as a young man. According to the Bible (Ex. 2) Moses saw an Egyptian striking a Hebrew. They were alone—the three—nobody else was in sight and Moses "slew the Egyptian and buried him in the sand." Next day, Moses saw two men—this time both Hebrews—fighting one another. When Moses tried to stop them the aggressor revealed the fact that the news of Moses' action of the previous day was common knowledge. Accordingly, Moses fled from danger of arrest. This story—by no means a bad story from any point of view—is thus "enlarged" by Mr. Noel to fit the atmosphere of the L.B.C.:—

Moses led a successful strike of brickmakers and slew the Egyptian tyrant.

The present volume contains many differing points of view. It would be easy to quote many uncompromising expressions of individual writers who seem to contradict the suggestion that there can ever be anything but a resistant force "against the forward march of the workers' movement"—as Professor John Macmurray puts it. And yet the same admirably clear writer assumes that "if it is possible to be a Communist and remain a Christian, then the Communist interpretation of religion must be mistaken." But why? If a Mormon joins a Rationalist Society this need not imply that the definition of Mormonism is wrong. I am sure that some Jews are willing to belong to Nazi associations; I doubt if Nazis feel inclined to modify their ideas about Jews on that account.

Professor Macmurray concludes the volume with the sort of "synthesis" which, while it refuses to accept a "supernatural God," will not accept the Rationalist rejection of religion which seems to us the only alternative . . . in a logical scientific world. Much that Professor Macmurray says is reasonable and particularly his clear

judgment that it is impossible "to reconcile the conflict of views" contained in this book, which has chapters by Materialist writers who are in complete antagonism to any sort of "accommodation" between Christian and Materialist ideas and aims. But Prof. Macmurray's chapter is called: "Towards a Synthesis," and these are the words with which he concludes this volume:—

God is no more supernatural than matter. Both are infinities and lie beyond all their finite manifestations. God is infinite personality; and personality dissociated from matter in idea is purely ideal—that is to say non-existent. God is real and therefore he is the ultimate synthesis of matter and spirit, of Nature and Man.

We can only describe these remarks as indicating a desire to re-admit into respectability a Deity who can now be believed in no more by serious thinkers. The ideal God goes and the Real God remains. Many of us see no advantage at all in the change. Few Christians will object to their God being given a title they have never disputed, even if they also continue to call Him supernatural and ideal.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

### Wilkes and Christianity

It is usual, when writing of Wilkes, to express abhorrence at his personal character. The obscene verse-satire *Essay on Woman*, with which he was associated, and which proved such a godsend to the Government, has been the chief charge against him. The Government, incidentally, forged evidence against him, and there is no doubt that they suborned Mr. Martin, M.P., to kill him in a duel. But forgery and murder are, of course, mild matters for a legal Government to undertake, in the eyes of our historians at any rate; while Wilkes's liking for smut, in which he at least accompanies men like William Shakespeare and Robert Burns, is considered damning. Wilkes had several love-affairs; but in an age when men of his class were intensely brutal in such matters, there is no record of the slightest unfeeling act on his part. In politics he stands out as a man of absolute integrity amid a crowd of time-servers and blackguards, a man of an integrity not merely passively different from his fellows, but actively and selflessly devoted to the cause of popular liberty. But he had something to do with the *Essay on Woman*; and so he was an "unprincipled profligate." (The undoubted real author of the poem was Thomas Potter, son of an Archbishop of Canterbury.)

There is one book on Wilkes, however, which one can unreservedly recommend, *That Devil Wilkes*, by Raymond Postgate. Postgate not only understands the political and economic conditions under which Wilkes carried on his struggle; he has also a penetrating and sympathetic understanding of Wilkes himself. Anyone who wishes to realize both the part Wilkes played in his century, and the fine quality of his character, should read this excellent biography.

But I am writing this note on Wilkes's religious views because I have just been reading through the amiable letters which he wrote to his beloved daughter Polly. He would probably have called himself a Deist, though he consistently pleaded in Parliament for complete toleration. He supported measures for dissenting ministers and schoolmasters; he supported relief for Roman Catholics; he earnestly supported in April, 1779, absolute toleration for all religious opinions and for Atheism.

His attitude to Christianity is sufficiently shown by the following jesting passages from letters to his daughter. No man with a shred of belief could have written in such a vein:—

I mean Mrs. Molyneux some lobsters, which are delicious on this coast, but the weather has been too rough, and the cowardly, methodistical fishermen have not dared to venture out these three days. It is very extraordinary, that the heresy of Methodism has infected almost all the seafaring people here, and has made them cowards as well as simpletons. I remain, however, sound in the faith, and will keep to my good orthodox mother,

the Church of England, to the last moment of its legal establishment. (July, 1778).

How edifying is the conduct of Mr. Alderman Wilkes. . . . I have been this morning at church, and heard a really good sermon on Faith, Hope and Charity, three sweet sisters, the eldest of which, however, I know little of; but the other two good girls are my favourites, and I wish always to dwell with me. (May, 1778).

I send you a country loaf of brown bread, as I think exquisite, made by a baker three miles from hence, but as the Scripture says, it is not by bread alone, you will find in the same basket a brace of woodcocks. . . . (January, 1779).

The memorial of the twelve admirals seems to me perfectly absurd. . . . I whispered to Lord Kelly, who is not a strict believer, that I thought the twelve admirals as great fools as the twelve —,\* and as bad writers. (January, 1779).

Shall I, my dearest Polly, give you an account of yesterday's Christmas dinner? It is so like an alderman to talk the day after of what he had yesterday: yet, perhaps, being a female, you may be curious, and therefore I give it:

The paschal lamb, with the fry—a virgin pullet, stuffed with pigeon's eggs—St. Peter's cock, à la cocky decky—a large cod's head from the miraculous draught—tricastee of innocents—cloven tongues avec de la sauce au St. Esprit—Baptist's Head in a charger—calves heads à la Golgotha—des saucisses males à la Madelaine.

The desert consisted of *bon chrétien* pears—and the wine was *lachrymæ Christi* (the famous wine near Naples, called the tears of Christ. An Irishman said on tasting it, he wished that Christ had wept in Ireland.) Was not this a very suitable dinner for the anniversary which was celebrated? (December, 1779).

JACK LINDSAY.

\* The 1804 editor puts a dash, but one presumes that Wilkes wrote Apostles in full.

### Acid Drops

There is in existence a "Woman's Guild of Empire," and this guild has just issued a circular to its members concerning the International Congress of Freethinkers. A profession of belief in Freedom of speech is made, but this does not cover a Congress which is not merely Godless, but which has the honesty to say so. Therefore the guild believes this Congress ought not to be permitted. The circular says:—

We cannot allow this proposed Congress to be held without comment, any more than we should allow a Congress of International Thieves to be held without comment.

This is quite a ladylike—a Christian ladylike—comment. But, very mildly, we may say that many a meeting of International thieves has been held in this country without raising the slightest protest from Christian organizations, and some under rather distinguished patronage. We do not think it is really thieves, national or international, to whom these meek Christian ladies object. It is the kind of robbery to which objection is raised, and as the aim of the Congress is to rob one section of humanity of its credulity and stupidity, and to prevent another section from exploiting this stupidity and credulity, the Congress becomes a very serious matter, which gave threats to the Christian Church. We note that the *Freethinker* exposure has had the effect of killing the Christian lie that the Congress was organized and ordered and paid for by Russia. But the venom, dear ladies, the Christian venom, remains, and also the will to lie. And we are still waiting for some Christian leader to reprimand his fellow believers for not being even clumsy liars.

Freedom is spreading rapidly in the British Empire. The latest example we have come across is Canada. A recent Act, known locally as the "Padlock Act," was recently passed in Quebec. This Act makes it illegal to use any house for the propagation of Communism or "bolshivism" by any means whatsoever. The Act

also gives the Attorney-General power to close and padlock any premises in which he believes there is any sort of propaganda by way of word of mouth or by printing or publishing. There is no definition given of either Communism or Bolshevism, which will probably cover anything to which the Attorney-General objects. Any experiment in communal life might easily come under the Act, and it would certainly apply to the experiments of Robert Owen and others, which will give us some idea of how much we have retrograded in this respect. We do not do it in this crude way in Britain; we merely create a number of little dictators and places, and by giving a Minister of State the power to make laws "on his own" place him above the courts and create an arbiter of the freedom of everybody. We do not wonder that Lord Halifax, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mr. Chamberlain, Sir Samuel Hoare, and others of prominence are so sympathetic to Messrs. Mussolini and Hitler. The example of Canada may give our own political leaders fresh encouragement in the path they are pursuing. Dictatorship in one form or another—the German, the Italian, the Russian, the British—is one of the most serious dangers that fronts us to-day.

A certain mid-Victorian Bishop earned for himself the title of "Soapy Sam." We have a suspicion that the Archbishop of Canterbury has set out to earn the title of "Slimy Cant-u-ar." In the recent debate in the House of Lords on foreign affairs, introduced by Lord Snell, the Archbishop quoted from an alleged letter—no name was given—written him from Austria, which expressed the pride and joy with which the people of Austria welcomed the entrance of Hitler. There is only one word that fits this kind of statement, and no one in the House of Lords had the courage to say it. All the same we question whether anyone believed either the Archbishop or the writer of the letter, if he existed. Consider. The entrance of the Germans was in fact a military occupation. There was no warning, and hundreds of bombing-planes were flying over Vienna. The concentration camps and prisons are full to overflowing with prisoners, many thousands of whom tried to escape from Austria but were not allowed to leave; thousands have committed suicide—assisted, there is no doubt, in many cases by the bullets of the Nazis—civilians have been beaten up wholesale, and forced to do degrading jobs with Nazis looking on; the murderers of Dollfuss have been liberated and treated as heroes by the Germans, while the men who tried them are to be tried for treason. Hitler is to have a plebiscite on the question of his occupation of Austria, and, to make sure, has the impudence to arrange for a disfranchisement of a large number of Austrians, and to throw the vote of the whole of the German people into the scale. And the "vote" is to be taken in the usual way, under the watchful eyes of Nazis with a beating up, or imprisonment, for all who show disagreement. It is said by reputable newspaper correspondents that the terror in Austria is worse than that in Germany, and that not twenty-per-cent in Austria would vote for the annexation if the vote had been really free. And the Archbishop reads a letter from an unnamed correspondent, testifying to the joy with which the Austrians received the occupation! Oh, Slimy Cant-u-ar; Wilberforce was a very poor thing at the side of Yourself!

It only needed Lord Redesdale to add to Slimy Cant-u-ar's eulogy by saying that "the gratitude of the whole of the world was due to Hitler" to complete the insult to ordinary decency and intelligence. Lord Hugh Cecil properly reminded Lord Redesdale that if he had been a Liberal, a Socialist or a Jew in Austria, he would probably have formed a different opinion of the god-sent Hitler. What Lord Hugh thought of the Archbishop he did not say. Probably his respect for the Church kept him quiet, but that he must hold him in complete contempt we do not doubt. But the public ought not easily to forget the language of "Slimy Cant-u-ar."

Every person who applies for a motor-car driving licence must pass a driving test. The object is to protect the general public. Which leaves us wondering whether a man happening to be a representative here of General Franco will be less likely to injure members of the public than would a British subject. This state of mind has been induced by the fact that the licensing authorities, anxious to please General Franco, the darling of Mussolini, for whose faithfulness and honesty of intention we have Mr. Chamberlain's word, has just been given a driving licence without passing a test. So we are left wondering what power is it that makes it quite safe for Senor Don Jose F. Villaverde, Secretary to the Duke of Alba—Franco's representative here—that does not operate in the case of John Smith of Tooting?

Perhaps the answer is supplied by the Rev. F. Harwood, Vicar of Oakworth, who has expressed the belief (*Bradford Telegraph and Argus*, March 25), that Franco "is on the side of the Angels." Of course, if Franco is on the side of the angels, and as Franco is, on the authority of a distinguished member of Parliament, a "Gallant and Christian gentleman," (We raise no demur to the "Christian") it may be assumed that the angels are also on the side of Franco's representatives in this country. Therefore it may be that the authorities may take it that the angels will guard the British public against being run over in this country even though Senor Villaverde lacks a licence. And who are we, who would not know an angel if we saw one, to say how far the power of angels extends. Particularly when we ought to remember that Franco is the representative of Mussolini in Spain, and that the angels may even have inspired him to provide Franco with men, money and arms to conduct what he called, the other day, one of Italy's wars in Spain.

"A Teacher" writes to the *Sheffield Telegraph*: asking "Cannot we have a day of intercession for the peace of the world such as we had in 1918?" We think we had better not. The reply to that day of prayer was the Versailles Peace Treaty, and that has been one of the principal causes of the present state of the world. "Teacher" might find a better precedent than the 1918 Day of Intercession.

It may encourage hopes of intellectual progress to learn that Church authorities are sceptical about 12-years old Henriette Dejean having had a vision from the "virgin mother." "Encouraging"—if we did not think the Church has doubts concerning the gullibility of the modern generation. The Mayor of St. Bonnet de Montauroux, Henriette's village about 70 miles from Lyons, prepared to "cash in" on the vision, but in spite of a huge gathering of "pilgrims" the virgin failed to appear. Poor little Henriette has made herself ill with despondency, but the "Church authorities" point out that she "is somewhat backward and may have imagined the visions." M'yes!—much virtue in a "may."

Mr. Beverley Nichols, who takes himself far more seriously than any other person takes him, has been searching England for a hero. Amongst all the living things that crawl, or walk, or fly, or swim, he has found his hero in Sir Oswald Mosley. He believes that Mosley and Hitler are the types that will save the country from disaster. One is puzzled to know why he has left out such admirers of Hitler as Lord Halifax, Lord Londonderry and some others that might be named. Sir Oswald Mosley told Mr. Nichols that he is tired of men who think; he wants men who feel. We fancy that Sir Oswald had the kind of man he admires in Mr. Nichols, and Mr. Nichols certainly found in Sir Oswald an embodiment of the man who does not waste time in thinking. Spiritually the two are twin souls. Those who don't know much of Mr. Nichols should read his, of late greatly reduced, weekly contribution to the *Sunday Chronicle*. It should be written for men who do not think, by one who has never tried to think.

Mr. Nichols now complains that his recent book has brought him many abusive letters. Probably he wrote them to himself, for as an admirer of a leader who does not like thinking, it is not to be taken for granted that many who did think would bother Beverley Nichols with letters. Very tearfully he asks, "Why Have I Done It?" And he replies that he simply had to do it. Well, Hitler says he was selected by Providence, and a Providence that could select Hitler and his follower Mosley might well have picked out Beverley Nichols as making an admirable Trinity, in which the one equals the three and the three are just one. Of course, this assumption places a heavy responsibility on the shoulders of Providence, but Beverley Nichols certainly needs explaining. But when Mr. Nichols says that he could earn more money by writing pleasant things, we beg to differ. To always write pleasantly one must be able to put real thought into one's writing, and thought is not Mr. Nichols' strong suit. To attract attention he must run wild, worship Mosley, or discover that Germany is an ideal land. By the way, Mr. Nichols' last book was entitled *No Place Like Home*, and "Home" was England. Probably that book did not sell well, so now he follows it with one that finds nothing good in England, but that pantomimic person, Sir Oswald Mosley.

Proud of the fact that President and Mrs. Roosevelt are of the congregation, a church at Hyde Park, New York State, erected a placard "This is the President's Church." On which (so runs the story) someone chalked "Formerly God's." . . . There's a case of the penalty of *absentee ownership*, so far as the "former" owner is concerned.

Tottenham Police Station displays a notice: "Never cross the road looking up to Heaven or you will soon be there." Yet we doubt whether those whose yearnings are so well expressed in that well-known hymn: "Heaven is my Home," will be eager to act on the gentle hint.

One of our leading Modernists, the Rev. H. D. A. Major, says that when we decide that a biblical narrative has no historical value, it may still be of a very high moral or spiritual value. Which being interpreted means that after the Bible has stood for historical and scientific truth, when against the will of believers it is demonstrated that it has neither scientific nor historical value, then we must keep it in its position of power and privilege by discovering that it has great moral and spiritual worth. And all this means is that by hook or by crook the Bible must be kept where it is—under false pretences. Whether Christianity is ancient or modern, in a modern environment it cannot but make for mental and moral crookedness.

What curious ideas Christians have of reasoning! A writer to the *Church Times* says there is plenty of evidence for "the fall of the angels," and cites the testimony of Matthew, Peter, Luke and John. But how can what they say be evidence? No judge would convict a cat for stealing milk on evidence of this kind. After all, Christians believe that the angels fell thousands of years before Matthew & Co. were born. They could only say what they had heard. The evidence of a Salvation Army drum-walloper is quite as good as the Evangelists on this point. But this really is Christian evidence. One man tells another what he believes. The other tells someone else, and so on, world without end. And all the time the evidence of the last man is no better than the first.

The Rev. Dr. F. E. England thinks that Jesus was "disappointed" in Judas the Betrayer. If Jesus was God, then He certainly had no reason to be surprised at what has always been represented as a "Plan" conceived before the foundation of the world. If the authors of the gospel stories make Jesus appear to be disappointed, it is only natural that fiction writers should imagine gods acting like men would act. They had no experience of what a god would see or hear or feel.

Pastor Neimoller has justly been praised for his independent attitude towards the German Government. He deserves it. But it is clear as can be, that the overwhelming majority of Christian clergy in Germany have given in to Hitlerism. And England has no sort of claim to put on airs about such "Vicar of Bray" submission to the State. At the present time the Archbishops' Report on Doctrine has "outraged" the feelings of hundreds of clergy, according to various newspapers. But we venture to predict that whatever the State decides, the English clergy will accept—if the alternative is resignation and loss of salary.

It is high time that Secular Education became a living issue again. After the Report of Doctrine, even a popular journal like *Everybody* declares that the children must cease to be taught doctrines which Archbishops and clergy repudiate. This occasion is taken by the Rev. Cecil H. S. Wilson, M.A., to emphasize the need for the churches to reorganize their Sunday schools and to be contented with the State subsidy and the L.E.A. Syllabus of religious teaching. The Sunday Schools are the right place for the Churches to teach whatever theology they wish, to those who attend voluntarily to learn it. We object altogether to Religious Teaching in State-supported schools. It is, at any rate, an outrage on the present and the future to go on teaching as true religion to children that which is now admitted to adults is false.

A preacher writing in a weekly religious paper tells how he once preached from the text: "Then shall thy peace be like the river." As it happened the river just across the road was in full overflowing flood, and was roaring like a vast torrent. We suppose the story is told to remind Christians that the present peace in Europe is like "the Peace of God which passeth understanding." We noticed that Hitler acknowledged the hand of God in his recent rape of Austria.

The Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmasnoise, Dr. J. J. McNamee, believes that "too often does the fair flower of virtue wilt and wither in the languorous atmosphere of these ultra-modern ballrooms." Now there's a "fair flower" of speech! But—how comes it that celibacy is so intimate with such a subject?

### Fifty Years Ago

THE wonders related of Jesus or of Moses are like those related of Apollonius—only evidence of the credulity and superstition of the narrators. The world, where Christians once had sway, is beginning to laugh at the old fables of Balaam and Lazarus. The belief in Providence, prayer, and celestial interference is departing. People will in time learn that it is as foolish to worship a god made out of old ideas as to worship one formed of stone. The churches and chapels still have their worshippers; the offerings tinkle in the plates. There is still a large class vitally interested in the maintenance of religion, but the real power over men's lives has gone, never to return. Any straw will show which way the wind blows. Look at the ends for which men are striving. However various, they are all secular. Where is Christianity in the actual life of the world? Does it inspire the politician? Is it regarded by the physician or scientist? No, it rather embarrasses them. Those who trade under the old name show they have got rid of the old stock. Diabolism, hell-torments, miracles, are being gradually discarded. We are now offered a non-miraculous Christianity, which is something like a round square. Abstract from Christianity the miraculous element, and what you have left is not Christianity at all, but a few moral dicta common to all civilized faiths. The so-called Christians, who are clearing their religion of its objectionable features, are really destroying it, and aiding Freethought in the work of bringing the time when the progress of this world will be the only care of its inhabitants, and the amelioration of the race the only religion of mankind.

*The Freethinker*, April 8, 1888.

# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

N. ANDREWS.—Pleased to learn that you consider the *Freethinker*, gets "better and better" Our writers give of their best. We have had several requests that the "Views and Opinions" on "Suffer Little Children" might be reprinted as a leaflet. We will consider the matter.

A. F. BULLOCK, J. T. IVES, T. A. WILLIAMS, AND S. DAWSON.—Pleased to hear from more fifty-year-old readers. We are hoping to hear from many more yet, and will write on the subject later.

R.W.—Local councils have nothing to do with remitting Churches and other places of worship from rates and taxes. It is legal endowment that is given them by Act of Parliament. There are, consequently, no assessments to be examined. They are not assessed. The Council can only act in such cases where, for various reasons, it may remit for some public purpose. The agitation should be directed against the Act, not against local governing bodies. The exemption is automatically cancelled in law if not in fact, where the Church or Chapel is let for secular purposes for which money is received.

J. BEVINS.—Thanks for order; books despatched as requested.

J. H. WOODLIFFE.—We are contemplating reprinting the "Suffer Little Children" as a leaflet for distribution. It may, as you suggest, do good.

FOR Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—A. E. Macdonald, £5; W. Parry, 2s. 6d.

C. KAINES (New South Wales).—We have read your letter with great appreciation. It is the fashion in certain circles to decry Spencer, but apart from special theories his love of liberty is something that we should like to see to-day more generally appreciated. We are approaching a state of things where the alternative appears to be a choice of tyrants.

H. SILVESTER.—Perhaps next week.

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.

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

In commenting on what I considered the Bishop of Chelmsford's attempt to "pass the buck" by inferentially making non-Christians responsible for the present state of the world, we did him a kind of injustice. At least there was one passage in his article on which we might have said something by way of approval. He said, speaking of the International Congress:—

I was approached more than once to join in a protest against this Congress, and to petition that it should be forbidden. I declined to do so for two reasons.

In the first place I do not like the idea of Christianity being compelled to go whimpering for protection to the Home Secretary when it is challenged or confronted with opposition. . . . A religion which has to hide behind the police is really a very poor thing.

All we can say to that is, Hear, Hear! And we are willing to believe that the Bishop *thinks* he means what

## Obituary

W. J. W. EASTERBROOK

(Preliminary Notice)

We deeply regret to record the death of W. J. W. Easterbrook. The Freethought movement had no more devoted friend than he, and he was well known to Freethinkers throughout the country because of his assiduous attendance at Conferences, and other society gatherings. He was a member of the N.S.S. Executive, and also of the Secular Society, Limited, besides being one of the Trustees of the Freethinker Endowment Trust. It was at his suggestion that the Trust came into existence.

For some few years Mr. Easterbrook had been in indifferent health, and the end came on April 2, at his home in Saltash, Cornwall. The cremation will take place on Friday, April 8, at Golders Green, at 11.30. Mr. Cohen will conduct the service.

he says. But proof that he really does so without any kind of prevarication or qualification involves action in some direction other than that of not joining in an appeal to stop the Congress—which he is really powerless to do openly and by legal means. And without these further steps a great many may easily mistake the Bishop's liberality as a cautious move against attempting what is impossible of accomplishment, and would therefore bring further discredit on Christianity.

If the Bishop is in earnest concerning his belief that he does not like to think of Christianity asking for the protection of the Government, then he should be decidedly in favour of the abolition of the blasphemy laws, for that clearly is police protection against anyone using the same language concerning Christianity, which they are quite at liberty to use with regard to other subjects. He should also be against all Sabbatarian laws and insist on Sunday being treated as every other day in the week is treated. He should be against bishops having seats in the House of Lords, which gives the Church of England privileges that are denied other institutions. There is also the trifling matter of the Churches being given a government grant of many millions annually in the shape of the remission of rates and taxes. These will be enough instances to go on with, but there are many others. And it is quite clear that the bishop's talk of not desiring his religion to be protected by the Home Secretary and the police, is just so much emptiness until he does actually advocate that the State shall stand aside and let religious opinion rest upon the same basis as other opinion.

Mr. T. Morrison writes asking whether we can give him full information concerning the legend of the Angel of Mons, reference to which was made in a recent issue of the *Freethinker*. The full story is a lengthy one, but here is a summary. The story first appeared in the *Evening News* for September 29, 1914. It was entitled "The Bowmen," and appeared after as part of a small volume of short stories. Mr. Machen had no intention of presenting a statement of fact, but the clergy seized on it as a record of divine intervention, and lied and manufactured evidence in its support, until they had to retire from the field. Mr. Harold Begbie, an "adventurous" journalist, ready to write up anything that promised a fee, took the side of the clergy in a shilling volume called *On the Side of the Angels*, and severely and piously rebuked—at an agreed royalty—anyone who should cast doubt on so religious a tale. He was followed by Mr. Ralph Shirley, editor of *Occult Review*, who accepted the story with much learned nonsense about the "psychic" and "spiritual exaltation" and other clichés of the credulous and the half-mentally trained. He called his pamphlet *The Angel Warriors at Mons*. There were a number of other pamphlets and articles, which, with newspaper cuttings, are before us as we write.

The clergy by the score brought forward many reasons why the tale must be true. They produced what they were pleased to call *evidence* that it must be true. The *Daily Mail* and the *Evening News*, which showed the same devotion to truth that these papers display to-day, took the side of the angels, and rebuked Mr. Machen for not believing his own legend. In its issue for June 2, 1915, the *Evening News* said that Mr. Machen "proved to have written better than he knew, for various witnesses—officers and men who took part in the retreat—came forward to testify to seeing the vision that Mr. Machen imagined." The Rev. Dr. Horton said if anything could be established it was this story, and the Bishop of London, never in the rear where anything stupid was on foot, backed the legend. *Evidence* also appeared in the *Two Worlds*, and "psychics" appeared to look on the event as heaven-sent in order to permit them to let their fancy run or indulge in some good, robust, religious lying. Eventually the tale was dropped, although as usual not one of the clergy had the decency to publicly admit his "error." The story is an interesting one, and later, when we have space and time we may tell the whole tale, with its bearings on religious beliefs in general.

*The Passing of Heaven and Hell*, by Joseph McCabe (Watts & Co., 1s.), is a timely and running criticism on the bearings of the Church of England Commission's Report, and its bearings on historic Christian doctrines and the present situation. Mr. McCabe has little difficulty in showing that the Church, as represented in the Report, is in hopeless conflict with its own historic teachings, with its own members, and with modern culture. We think that most unprejudiced readers of the Report will agree with Mr. McCabe that it will no longer attract outsiders to come into the Church or disarm the doctrinal combatants within. The Commission did its best, but its best is very, very bad. Freethinkers should find this pamphlet handy to give, or to introduce to a Christian friend.

Another publication from Messrs. Watts & Co. is *The Fellowship of Reason* by Ernest Thurtle, M.P., price twopence. Mr. Thurtle writes a very persuasive plea for closer co-operation amongst Freethinkers, both against the common enemy and for the purpose of establishing a closer association among heretics. The pamphlet contains a secondary plea for each Freethinker doing some little thing towards helping the general cause. On only one point have we a difference with Mr. Thurtle. He says that even those who come into our ranks and do nothing "swell the numbers," and are so helpful. That we think depends upon the point of view. If one is aiming at building another Church with a non-religious ritual, well and good. But, as we have so often said, the Freethought movement must always be a pioneer movement, and the more important the pioneering the fewer the numbers will be, and the more important the work done. The real need of the Freethought movement is quality, not quantity. Large movements tend to develop an orthodoxy, and to offer concessions to public prejudice that should be foreign to a pioneer movement. All the same, we find ourselves in agreement with the main theme of Mr. Thurtle's essay.

*A Bird-Lover's Philosophy* is the title chosen by Mr. Eric Hardy, F.Z.S., the well-known naturalist, who writes with his usual charm about the fascination of field-glasses. He sees and describes most vividly a fight he saw between a falcon and a redshank. A redshank is a kind of plover, a beautiful little bird with brownish upper and lower parts and bright orange legs and feet. Mr. Hardy felt exactly as any sensitive being would feel as he watched the agony of the falcon's victim. Mr. Hardy behaved as all of us do: he just looked on while the redshank hopelessly tried again and again to escape its destined end. We have to agree that no human being could humanize wild Nature. Mr. Hardy fails to deduce the moral of the Atheist's outlook. At least we know that there is no "Intention," no Designing "Governor of the Universe," no Eternal Murderer of his own creatures.

## One Sunday Evening

Probably . . . the reason why you have not found God already is that you are unwilling to forsake a particular sin.—Mr. A. J. Russell.

GALLANT Christian gentlemen, whether of the kind who murder or only murder with their tongues, have always been fond of Mr. Russell's thesis. It so prettily raises them on their saintly perch; it so conveniently dispenses with any necessity for argument. A growth in human feeling and decency has kept the pious and luscious mouthful unspilt for the last few decades. The priests of the bloody faith, and their mental and moral counterparts amongst the laity, are, however, just now gulping down draughts of an old vintage; religion, they consider, is dying in this confounded atmosphere of liberalism and sweet reasonableness. What we want is muscular Christianity. Let us return to the pious Joshua and his bloody generalship. There was a gallant Christian gentleman for you! Back to David, the Man after God's Own Heart! He knew his mind when he went out evangelizing. He taught the modern, gallant, Christian gentleman how to deport himself. He "put them under saws, and under harrows of iron, and under axes of iron, and made them pass through the brick-kilns." So, with the Cross of Jesus going on before (firmly clutched by Sir Henry Page Croft), let us sing: Onward, Christian Soldiers! Remember St. Bartholomew! But, if there should be sufficient numbers to resist our Guernica methods, lie, my gentle Christian lambs, lie.

Non-Christians, then, hug a particular sin. We remember well when this was a common retort of piety, intended to be a knock-out blow. A sense of shame, however, blew over Christendom, the old method was regarded as "hitting below the belt," and looked like dying. Gallant, Christian gentlemen are, however, raising their heads again; there is so much to encourage them.

Let us go back thirty-five years or thereabouts, when religion was stronger and the Russellites were as plentiful as blackberries. I was enjoying a solitary walking-tour over what is known as the Burns' District of Scotland. The first week-end I had found accommodation in a temperance hotel in Dumfries. In the evening I walked into one of the public rooms and found it almost full of ministers (mainly Presbyterians) and lay brothers. It was about nine o'clock, and all apparently had concluded their day's work in the Lord's vineyard and were relaxing. I found a seat in one of the room's corners and listened to the talk—not without curiosity.

The subject they were debating was the habit of "marrying for money" amongst "meenisters." It was put quite plainly by an elderly minister that the only sensible thing for the young cleric to do, considering the poor scale of ministerial stipends, was to look for a wife with money. The old man looked like interpreting the feelings of the house, when the only young minister present expressed the sentiment that this was a terribly worldly point of view to take. Surely there were other and more important things to consider. Another minister, unfortunately possessed of a nose of vivid red, spoke sympathetically with the young man; apart from these two, the feeling of the meeting was emphatically in favour of no sentiment in business.

A little later the red-nosed minister left the company. Conversation flagging for a while, one minister present, greatly daring, said that he thought it was possible that the nose such as their brother unfortunately possessed could be brought about by indigestion. He spoke interrogatively as if hope on

such a matter was a thing to be encouraged. Another cleric, whose deliberate tones I can recollect, said he was afraid that such an interpretation in this particular case would be to stretch the doctrine of charity too far. Then, I remember, there came into the conversation the case of a popular minister in Edinburgh who had lost his pulpit because one (or more) of his sermons had been lifted from a very learned American divine. I remember one of them commenting "No-one wanted to get rid of him but the silly man stuck it out and insisted that the sermon was his, so, of course, he had to go. It was his pride that ruined him." Then the conversation got less entertaining, and I was thinking of leaving them, when the remarks of the younger man compelled my attention.

He informed the company that he had had a ministry in Johannesburg, and there he had been taken seriously ill. So ill was he in fact, that the senior Presbyterian Minister, a man of great repute in Johannesburg, had been sent for to administer comfort to the dying man.

"The strange thing was," he went on, "When the minister, Mr. Lloyd, came in, I knew that the whole business was unnecessary. I felt certain that I was going to get better. Not only that, but I was so alert that I was conscious that Mr. Lloyd was not going about his duties in the right way. What he was doing was not in accordance with the usual procedure of a Presbyterian minister on such an occasion. He seemed to be only concerned with being friendly and as cheerful as possible."

"Do you happen to know the full name of Mr. Lloyd?" I asked. "J. T. Lloyd," was the reply.

I then informed an extremely attentive audience that the reason for Mr. Lloyd's unusual procedure was perhaps understandable. Mr. Lloyd had left the Presbyterian Church, and was then engaged in Free-thought propaganda in England, and amongst other things writing regularly weekly articles in the *Freethinker*. One of the ministers, the young one, was genuinely interested. He said that what Mr. Lloyd had given up was an income of at least (from all sources) nine-hundred pounds a year. "But," said another, "He would probably be getting as much as that in England; possibly more." I felt a diffidence in speaking about such a subject, but I thought the circumstances warranted it. I said I was in a position to sufficiently answer that question and, if Mr. Lloyd derived as much as a fourth of that amount from the Free-thought movement, I should be extremely surprised. Did I mean to say, I was asked from another source, that Charles Bradlaugh had not made that amount? I said I had spoken of what I knew: what Mr. Bradlaugh had earned was not within my knowledge. All I could say was that Bradlaugh had died a poor man, and that Mr. Lloyd, with all his high qualities, was hardly a Bradlaugh. At this point another of the company rose. "All I can say is that a man who leaves the Church of Christ as he did could have done so from only one reason, and that is because he was guilty of some particular secret sin." He then, having delivered his broadside, left the room.

Next morning my neighbour at the breakfast table asked what I was about to do. "I am having another walk round the town," I said. "Would you mind my joining you?" he queried.

In a little while he was talking about the group of the night before. "Presbyterian members always go to a temperance hotel," he said. "It keeps their congregations right, and it doesn't mean anything." I commented that the gentleman with the red nose would have to do more than stick to temperance

hotels to placate his flock. "Well, strange to say," he went on, "drink or no drink, I admire that man." He explained. It appeared that in his own town or village he of the red nose had stood up bravely and denounced a peer of the realm, *mixed up prominently in all religious movements*, because of the prevalence of that horrible and preventible disease—"phossy-jaw"—in his factory. My heart was now in accord with him of the red nose. If it could have been possible I would have gone a little out of my way to meet Cyrano and shake his hand so as to make amends for jumping to unwarrantable conclusions. *This lesson I have never forgotten.*

We spent a pleasant morning together. At last the time came for parting. "I would like to say one thing," he said hesitantly. "I was ashamed when that minister said what he did say to you last night. I want you to believe not only that it hurts me, but that I was not the only one there that it put about."

Readers are used to imaginative efforts from me. They should realize that this is a plain story of a real occurrence written as carefully and as exactly as I can. Mr. Lloyd (whose sin, it would appear, was avarice), heard of the happening from me; he was just amused. It was too faithfully in line with his experience to cause him surprise. His leader, G. W. Foote, was more surprised. He had not known up to then the extent of Mr. Lloyd's sacrifices.

T. H. ELSTOB.

## The Gentle Art of Lying

### III.

ONE of the causes of the religious tolerance of the old Romans was their polytheism, the Roman maxim being that the best God a man could have was the God of his own country. As the anonymous writer of the *First Seven Alleged Persecutions*—a tract dedicated to the memory of Thomas Scott and published in 1879—points out:—

Among the Romans the Christian vices of proselytism and religious intolerance were unknown. They had a national religion based on the principle of polytheism which does *not* know of any false gods. So, the Romans conceded to all other nations that which they claimed for themselves, namely, the observance of their traditional rights; for their religion, like other religions with which it came in contact was purely ceremonial. It taught how the gods were to be conciliated, but not what the gods were. . . . This exercise of tolerance was easy to the Romans, and almost a necessary consequence of their belief in local gods, a belief which further precluded the idea of proselytism. . . . Far therefore from wishing to impose their religion on the vanquished, the Romans were very circumspect in even permitting the vanquished to adopt it.

But this tolerance did not go to the length of permitting Christians or other monotheists to destroy idols or desecrate temples—which the more fanatical followers of Jesus often felt obliged to do. This is admitted by Renan in his *Marcus Aurelius*:—

Before a temple or an idol, they breathed hard, as if to repulse an impure thing, or made the sign of the Cross. It was not rare to see a Christian stop before a statue of Jupiter or Apollo, and say to it, as he struck it with his staff: "Ah well, you see, your God does not avenge you!" The temptation was strong in such a case to arrest the sacrilegious one and to crucify him saying, "And does your God avenge you?"

The mutilation which some of the greatest and most famous works of classical antiquity suffered,

was, perhaps, at the hands of Christians in their contempt for Pagan gods—as if their own god was anything else but pagan; and the destruction of so many ancient works of art increased as the Christians became more powerful. With this rise in power came Christian “history,” including the lives of the “saints,” mostly, if not all, pure fiction, in which the imagination of the writers ran riot. And that is how the “history” of the first ten alleged persecutions of the Christians came to be written. As far as I can gather, about the first writer who gives us the details of these persecutions is Sulpicius Severus in 422 A.D. They are said to be by Nero 64, A.D.; Domitian, 95 A.D.; Trajan, 107 A.D.; Hadrian, 125 A.D.; Aurelius Antoninus, 165 A.D.; Septimus Severus, 202 A.D.; Maximinus, 235 A.D.; Decius, 249 A.D.; Valerianus, 257 A.D.; Galerius, 303 A.D.

Mosheim is not a little perplexed at the fixing of these persecutions at the number ten when—so he claims—“the history of the Church does not exactly support this number.” The severe persecutions were fewer than ten; and if the provincial ones are included then there were more than ten. The number ten had perhaps some magical symbolism; it was a favourite number with the writer of Revelation (Ch. 17, v. 12), and can be found in other parts of the Bible, such as the Ten Commandments, the Ten Plagues, the ten Rebellions of Israel, the ten Virgins, the ten Parables of the Kingdom in Matthew, and lots more. What was then more natural than ten great Persecutions. And, indeed, some of the Church writers did claim the number ten for the persecutions just because it is used so much in the Bible.

When one comes to examine some of the later authorities for the alleged persecutions, it is amusing to see how they shirk the issue. For example, Mosheim admits that “learned men are not entirely agreed concerning the extent of the persecution under Nero.” Nor are they, one might add, agreed about the one under Domitian. That well known Christian writer, Dr. William Smith, says that “Christian writers attribute to Domitian a persecution of the Christians, but there is some doubt upon the matter; and the belief seems to have arisen from the strictness with which he exacted tribute from the Jews, and which may have caused much suffering to the Christians also.” Mosheim uses as his authority Hegesippus, but all we know about this gentleman comes from Eusebius, who tells us almost nothing about him. Whether he ever lived at all is extremely doubtful. At all events, he is the authority for the persecution under Trajan, and the account seems to have puzzled Mosheim, for he says it happened “even under the reign of the good Trajan.” On his own showing, Mosheim ought to have suspected any account supposed to have been written by Christians; he knew what inveterate liars they were.

Eusebius, who generally misses no persecutions in his history, seems never to have heard of the one under Hadrian. Actually, he shows Hadrian as protecting the Christians. Nor does he mention the one under Aurelius. In this he is supported by Dr. Smith and Merivale—who says, by the way, “The great merit of this paternal ruler was his protection of the Christians.” Eusebius does mention the persecution of the Christian Church by Severus, but gives no authority. Merivale and Smith do not mention it, just as they are silent about the one under Maximus. Gibbon, however, gives an account of the circumstances under which arose the slaying of a number of Christians; and he significantly adds that “it has improperly received the name of Persecution.”

Gibbon says of Decius that he was “an accomplished prince, active in war and affable in peace; who

together with his son, has deserved to be compared, both in life and death, with the brightest examples of ancient virtue.” This was the prince, Mosheim, following Eusebius and other early Church historians, says was responsible for putting “multitudes of Christians to death by the most horrid punishments.” Gibbon claims that “the rigorous treatment the Christians received under Decius,” was probably due to his desire “of delivering the empire from what he condemned as a recent and criminal superstition.” Mosheim admits, however, that in this persecution numbers of Christians apostated, and received certificates to that effect. But in any case, as both Mosheim and Gibbon rely on the authority of Eusebius and Lactantius for most of their facts about this persecution, it is difficult to say whether, if it did take place, the accounts have not been highly exaggerated. Eusebius is the authority also for the persecutions under Valerianus and Galerius.

Niebuhr, in his *Roman History*, claims that it was Decius “who first instituted a vehement persecution of the Christians, for which he is cursed by the ecclesiastical writers as much as he is praised by the pagan historians.” So that the accounts of the other persecutions are simply or mostly lies—or at least, lying accounts. It may be impossible to arrive at the exact truth; but of one thing we are certain, and that is, that the early Christian writers were just liars; and those following, who rely upon their history, simply repeat the lies.

What are known as the Diocletian persecutions (or those under Diocletian’s associate, Galerius), are supposed to be the worst the Christians ever suffered. According to Buck’s *Theological Dictionary* it lasted ten years. Houses filled with Christians were set on fire and

whole droves were tied together, and thrown into the sea. It is related that 17,000 were slain in one month’s time; and that during the continuance of this persecution, in the province of Egypt alone, no less than 144,000 Christians died by the violence of their persecutors; besides 700,000 that died through the fatigues of banishment, or the public works to which they were condemned.

These numbers are obviously based on “magic” symbolism. Gibbon, however, declares that under Diocletian there was peace and prosperity of the Church; and he adds that “the new system of policy, introduced and maintained by the wisdom of that prince, continued more than eighteen years to breathe the mildest and most liberal spirit of religious toleration.” The Church waxed in power, but, says Gibbon, the Bishops enjoyed and abused their liberty. The final result was that, egged on by Galerius, Diocletian published the general edict for the persecution of the Christians (though he was always averse to the effusion of blood); and it is possible that the Christians suffered badly. Here again, one is at the mercy of such authorities as Eusebius or Lactantius. And concerning the latter, Guizot and Milman, who edited Gibbon, are by no means in agreement. Gibbon points out that it is not certain if Lactantius wrote “the little treatise” under his name and wonders how he got his facts. Guizot thinks he could have got some from Constantine. “which,” adds Milman, “assumes the doubtful point of the authorship of the treatise.” It is all very interesting—and uncertain. And the Freethinker is entitled to question such authorities. They cannot agree among themselves except on one point, and that is, that there is very little doubt that they all lied as much as they could, and whenever they could. Few indeed have perfected the gentle art of lying so well as the early Christian historian.

H. CUTNER.

## Satanic Soliloquy

### RONDO

It was a dark and stormy night, and the three brigands—a cardinal and two priests—sat huddled round their camp fire. Presently, one of the priests asked: Your Eminence, if God made man, who made God? And the Cardinal replied:—

It was a dark and stormy night, and the three brigands—a cardinal and two priests—sat huddled round their camp fire. Presently, one of the priests asked: Your Eminence, if God made man, who made God? And the Cardinal replied:

It was a dark and stormy night. . . .

### LEXICOGRAPHICAL NOTE

An Atheist, I submit, is not merely one who disbelieves in God, but one who disbelieves in all the gods, including the ninety-nine One and Only True Ones.

### MONEY-MAKING RECEIPT

Take one Father, an Offspring (male), and a Ghost. Blend carefully, and add an ex-Virgin, a handful of Miracles, a dash of Heaven, a taste of Hell, and some Forbidden Fruit. Bottle well, and label: One and Only True Brand. Serve hot with faggot and pile, rack and boot, thumbscrews, massacre, and boiling oil.

### THE CURE

I am often asked: With what would you replace Christianity, if this ball were somehow deloused thereof? *Domine, dirige nos!* Does a doctor, after curing a patient of triple pneumonia, proceed to make him a present of a dose of malaria?

### SHADES OF WALT WHITMAN

Am I doomed eternally to gnash my false teeth in Hell? Very well, then. I'm doomed eternally to gnash my false teeth in Hell.

### THE MODERN MOSES

Thou shalt not be found out.

### THE CHRISTIAN CREDO

\* \* \*

That God did not allow tobacco to be discovered earlier than He did because He knew, had He done so, that St. Paul would most certainly have forbidden its use.

\* \* \*

That the end justifies the means. Example of the former: Another candidate for Heaven. Example of the latter: Burning alive at the stake.

\* \* \*

That Jonah swallowed the beluga.

\* \* \*

That the Bible is true—(a) Wholly; (b) Mostly; (c) Partly; and (d) Perhaps.

\* \* \*

That all Atheists, as they lie dying, bawl for the Holy Ghost, the parish priest, and a bottle of consecrated Castrol C.W.

\* \* \*

That God is Love.

P. E. CLEATOR.

## Correspondence

### RUSSIA

#### TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—I note from press cuttings that a controversy has developed in your columns around my *Assignment in Utopia*. Their strictures may be summed up in two charges that are really part of the same general charge: first, that the book does not acknowledge the good done by the Russian Revolution; and second, that it does not compare Soviet conditions with pre-revolutionary conditions.

If an author may be permitted an opinion on his own book, I would say that both strictures are unjustified, and that neither of them touches the essence of the book. I sought to record as accurately and honestly as I could the psychological and intellectual development of one man—myself—under the impact of Soviet life between 1928 and 1934. In the first year or two I placed the emphasis, in my mind and in my writing, upon the favourable aspects of the Revolution. I struggled passionately to keep the emphasis on those aspects.

The whole point of my story is that these horrors seemed to me to outweigh overwhelmingly, and largely to nullify, the actual and potential achievements of the revolution. To chide me for failing to exult over the spread of literacy and other positive elements in the picture is therefore to misunderstand my book completely. There is no phase of the revolution that is not in some measure discussed in *Assignment in Utopia*. But I differ from the Soviet enthusiasts in my estimate of the facts themselves, and of their relative importance in the larger scheme.

For instance: I have indicated repeatedly that peasants were being taught to read and write, and that elementary education was being provided for millions who would not have had it under Tsarism. I came to believe, however, that the totalitarian censorships, the suppression and punishment of independent thought, the cultural obscurantism, turned the new literacy into a cruel joke. The new generation was being taught to believe rather than to think. Teaching peasants to spell out their names, it seemed to me, meant little or nothing when the same peasants were being terrorized, liquidated by the hundred thousand, and starved to death by the million.

"I was not unmindful of the successful campaign to teach people to read and write," you may read on p. 468. "Elementary education for children was now almost universal." Then I went on to show the effects of intellectual censorships, political catechisms, and despotic suppression upon the minds of young and old. I pointed out that in Mussolini's Italy one sees the same drive for literacy.

It is not true that *Assignment in Utopia* ignores maternity homes and creches. It merely puts those things in proper relation to the persecutions that made hordes of children homeless and killed hundreds of thousands of children by starvation and exposure. Many chapters are devoted to industrialization; I pictured the fierce enthusiasm evoked by the Five Year Plan. But I also recorded the tragic collapse of that enthusiasm, the destruction of genuine trade unionism, the fantastic price in life and suffering exacted, etc.

There may be some justice in the charge that I did not give the "positive" side of the Revolution as much space or importance as it merits; that is a question of evaluation, and every observer is entitled to his own view. But it is altogether false to charge that I did not acknowledge that side. In the final analysis my whole struggle during those years was a continuous weighing of values. Ultimately I rejected the cosmic bookkeeping which balances horrors against achievements. I became convinced, rightly or wrongly, that the Soviet system under Stalin was so brutal, its inhumanity so monstrous, its essential disrespect for human life so horrible that it must be rejected despite its drives for literacy, its maternity homes, and its new factories.

Throughout the book there is an awareness of the historical background of ignorance, economic backwardness and political autocracy. Repeatedly I tried to indicate how that heritage conditioned Soviet life. That

may serve as an explanation, but not as a justification. My entire background and my long activity in the Labour and Radical movements are sufficient guarantee that I am no apologist for Tsarism. It is a sad fact all the same that Stalinism has carried ancient Russian evils to a new level of cruelty and despotism. Ultimately, no doubt, Russians will have more of the products of industry and more food; Westernization is doing that for Turks and Persians as well as Russians. That, however, will not, in my view, balance the system of forced labour, the millions of prisoners in concentration camps, the man-made famine, the brutalizing of the people, the total extinction of elementary human rights. Above all, it will not turn an exploiting State Capitalism, a sort of industrialized serf state, into "Socialism." Especially those who still value the original purposes and hopes of the revolution should disown the perversions. The very idea of Socialism must be rescued from its Kremlin captors.

EUGENE LYONS.

New York.

## J. R. HOLMES—BIRTH CONTROL PIONEER

SIR,—I feel justice was not done to J. R. Holmes in your obituary notice, which omitted all reference to his pioneering work in birth control, the role in which he will best be remembered.

One of the later pioneers of working-class neo-malthusianism, following in the tradition of Francis Place, and no doubt influenced considerably by Bradlaugh, he had been advocating birth control for close on half a century. In connexion with his neo-malthusian business at East Hanney, he was for many years one of the *Freethinker's* few advertisers; and was very proud of being able to carry a line, "Established over 40 years."

His best book, *True Morality: The Theory and Practice of Neo-Malthusianism*—that curious compendium of argument, quotation, information, advertisement, and testimonial—was first published from East Hanney as long ago as 1891, and had since gone through several editions. The first prosecution against it was not long delayed; in July, 1892, little more than six months after its appearance, a Bombay firm of booksellers was fined about £13 by the Chief Presidency Magistrate for selling a copy of it.

Holmes himself also suffered for his opinions, over and above the usual obstacles against which a pioneer has to contend; and in 1912, at Wantage Petty Sessions, when convicted on two charges connected with the one "offence" of sending a copy of his price-list of contraceptives and books through the post to a man of middle age, he was fined £10 and £10 10s. costs on each charge—£41 for the one book.

RONALD H. S. STANDFAST.

## CLARENCE DARROW

SIR,—I am very grateful to Mr. G. Bedborough for his kind reference to the loss the Freethought movement has sustained in the death of Clarence Darrow. Mr. Bedborough covered the ground in a very interesting manner, and in very few words. I hope you will excuse me if I recommend to the readers of the *Freethinker* a book on that subject, which I have read and enjoyed very much, *The Story of My Life*, Clarence Darrow, 7s. 6d. Published by Watts. This is a book all about himself, and those he came in contact with, written in a way that makes it a pleasure to read. No buyer of that book will regret his purchase.

J. MCCORRISKEN, SENR.

[Other letters are unavoidably held over this week.—EDITOR.]

## Branch News

## BIRKENHEAD (WIRRAL) BRANCH

THERE was an excellent attendance of members at the Seventh Annual General Meeting of the Birkenhead Branch, held on April 3. The Annual Report, which

was received with enthusiastic applause, revealed substantial increases in membership and the number of meetings held. Mr. R. H. S. Standfast was elected President for the next twelve months, and Mr. F. G. Stevens, Chairman. The Secretaryship will remain in the hands of Mr. Walter Fletcher. Four delegates were nominated to represent the Branch at the Glasgow Conference. In addition to the General Committee an Outdoor Committee was elected, and plans discussed for future propaganda. These included a proposal to organize a "Birkenhead Sunday Freedom League" on an independent and non-sectarian basis. Already enquiries have been made regarding the present position of Sunday games in Birkenhead, and contact had been made with the local branch of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association with a view to ascertaining how far the "Trade" would be willing to support a campaign for the opening of cinemas on Sundays. An investigation is to be made to discover how many Birkenhead churches and church halls have already been or are being wired for Sunday film shows.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

## LONDON

## INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, J. Langdon Davies—"America—Now."

WEST LONDON N.S.S. ("The King and Queen," Foley Street, W.1): 7.30, "Social" arranged by Lady Members.

## 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. (Highbury Corner) 8.0, Friday, Mr. L. Ebury. White Stone Pond, Hampstead, 11.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. South Hill Park, Hampstead, 8.0, Monday, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Tuson and Miss E. Millard, M.A.

## COUNTRY

## INDOOR

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Albion Court, Kirkgate): 7.15, Mr. G. Bissardi—"A Nihilist looks on."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. ("King's Café," Oxford Road): 6.30, Saturday. Twenty-First Annual General Meeting.

STOCKTON (Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, N. Charlton (Gateshead)—A Lecture.

## OUTDOOR

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place, Blackburn): 7.0, Mr. J. Clayton—"Crimes of Christianity."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (The Mound): 7.0, Mr. F. Smithies—"Why God Laughs."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Stevenson Square): 3.0, Sunday—"The World Whence and How." 7.0—"Heaven and Hell." Mr. W. A. Atkinson will speak at each meeting.

**B** LACKPOOL.—Easter and Onwards. Comfortable Apartments; 2s. 6d. two persons; 3s. Bed and Breakfast, single (No extras). Recommended by Freethinkers.—AVIS, 62 Woolman Road, Blackpool.

## The Scientific and Sensible Diet is Vegetarian

Free Literature on application to  
THE VEGETARIAN SOCIETY  
57 Princess Street, Manchester, 2

# NEW VOLUME

## ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING

### CHAPMAN COHEN

EDMUND BURKE ON ATHEISM  
 GEORGE BERNARD SHAW AND THE N.S.S.  
 CHRISTIANITY AND INTOLERANCE  
 THE WAYS OF GOD  
 AN APOLOGY FOR PARSONS  
 A CHRISTIAN MYTH  
 MYTHOLOGY AND HISTORY  
 WHAT IS BLASPHEMY?  
 BLATANT ATHEISM  
 THE GHOST OF RELIGION  
 CHRISTIANITY AND MYSELF

WHOSO WOULD BE A REFORMER!  
 THE FUNCTION OF ATHEISM  
 SHOULD OPINION BE FREE?  
 THE GREAT AND THE SMALL  
 GOD SAVE SUNDAY  
 LIFE AND DEATH  
 THE REAL CHESTERTON  
 THE HOLY BIBLE  
 AGAIN—THE BIBLE  
 CHRIST AND CHRISTMAS

Price 2s. 6d.

Postage 2<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub>d.

#### CONTENTS OF FIRST VOLUME

PSYCHOLOGY AND SAFFRON TEA  
 CHRISTIANITY AND THE SURVIVAL OF THE FITTEST  
 A BIBLE BARBARITY  
 SHAKESPEARE AND THE JEW  
 A CASE OF LIBEL  
 MONISM AND RELIGION  
 SPIRITUAL VISION  
 OUR EARLY ANCESTOR  
 PROFESSOR HUXLEY AND THE BIBLE  
 HUXLEY'S NEMESIS  
 PRAYING FOR RAIN  
 A FAMOUS WITCH TRIAL

CHRISTMAS TREES AND TREE GODS  
 GOD'S CHILDREN  
 THE APPEAL TO GOD  
 AN OLD STORY  
 RELIGION AND LABOUR  
 DISEASE AND RELIGION  
 SEEING THE PAST  
 IS RELIGION OF USE?  
 ON COMPROMISE  
 HYMNS FOR INFANTS  
 RELIGION AND THE YOUNG

#### CONTENTS OF SECOND VOLUME

RELIGION AND OPINION  
 A MARTYR OF SCIENCE  
 AS GOOD AS CHRISTIANS!  
 A FEARFUL EXAMPLE  
 THE HAPPY ATHEIST  
 THE GOSPEL OF PAIN  
 CHRISTIAN PESSIMISM  
 PERSECUTION AND TRUTH—THE GOSPEL OF  
 SUFFERING  
 RELIGION AND SEX  
 VULGAR FREETHINKERS  
 GOD'S WILL  
 VICE AND VIRTUE

RELIGION AND THE STAGE  
 RELIGION AND TO-DAY  
 WHY WE LAUGH  
 PUBLIC OPINION  
 THE BENEFITS OF HUMOUR  
 THE CLERGY AND PARLIAMENT  
 ON FINDING GOD  
 THE CONDESCENDING CHRISTIAN  
 GOD'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE  
 AN OLD MAXIM  
 TRUTH WILL OUT  
 WAR AND WAR MEMORIALS

#### CONTENTS OF THIRD VOLUME

ATHEISM—ENGLISH AND FRENCH  
 RELIGION AND THE FEAR OF DEATH  
 GOD AND MAN  
 RELIGION AND THE STATE  
 DESIGN IN NATURE  
 GOD AND HIS BIOGRAPHERS  
 GOD AND MORALS  
 FASTING AND FAITH  
 THE CHRISTIAN MYTH  
 THE DISCONSOLATE ATHEIST

WITCH DOCTORS IN LONDON  
 OUR FATHER—THE SAVAGE  
 THE ETHICS OF THE PULPIT  
 MAN AND MORALS  
 CIVILIZATION AND THE CROSS  
 THE BLESSED "SAWBATH"  
 DYING LIKE A CHRISTIAN  
 DO MIRACLES HAPPEN?  
 THE BRAIN AND THE "SOUL"

2s. 6d. Each volume

Four volumes post free 10s.

## *Hail the Pioneers!*

### HENRY HETHERINGTON

(1792-1849)

Ambrose G. Barker

The claims of orthodoxy are glorified along with their dead; the pioneers of heresy—religious and political—are promptly buried, and their names are either not included in future history or they are passed by slightly. Of how many to-day who call themselves reformers can it be said that they know the name of Henry Hetherington? Very few indeed could say *what* he did. Yet Hetherington was a pioneer in the fight against religious orthodoxy and tyranny, a pioneer of Trades Unionism, of the cheap Newspaper Press, and of many other reforms. An avowed Atheist, he served three terms of imprisonment, but, like Carlile, the Government could not bend and, in the end, did not break him.

This is a document that everyone should read.

Sixty-four pages, with portrait: Sixpence, by post, Sevenpence

## THE BIBLE HANDBOOK

i. BIBLE CONTRADICTIONS. ii. BIBLE ABSURDITIES. iii. BIBLE ATROCITIES. iv. UNFULFILLED PROPHECIES AND BROKEN PROMISES. v. BIBLE IMMORALITIES, INDECENCIES, AND OBSCENITIES

By G. W. Foote and W. P. Ball

Millions of people have read "The Bible"; but only a few read it with an unprejudiced mind. Believers read it in the light of inculcated obsessions and with their minds closed to a real understanding. "The Handbook" sets forth the Bible message as it really is, it is made to tell its own story. Every text is cited accurately and exact reference is given. It is a book that is useful, even indispensable to Freethinkers and it is educational to Christians.

Cloth 2s. 6d. Postage 3d.

## TWO NEW ISSUES

### PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE

by CHAPMAN COHEN

No. 11. Deity and Design

„ 12. What is the Use of a Future Life?

- No. 1. Did Jesus Christ Exist?  
2. Morality Without God  
3. What is the Use of Prayer?  
4. Christianity and Woman  
5. Must We Have a Religion?  
6. The Devil  
7. What is Freethought?  
8. Gods and Their Makers  
9. The Church's Fight for the Child  
10. Giving 'em Hell

Each Pamphlet contains Sixteen Pages

Price 1d.

Postage ½d.

CHEAPEST EDITION EVER PUBLISHED

## THE AGE OF REASON

THOMAS PAINE

Complete edition, 202 pp., with a 44 p. introduction by Chapman Cohen. Price 4d., postage 2½d. Or strongly bound in cloth with portrait, 1s 6d., postage 3d.

## AN ORATION ON THOMAS PAINE

COLONEL R. G. INGERSOLL

Price TWOPENCE.

By post 2½d.

## THOMAS PAINE

JOHN M. ROBERTSON

An Investigation of Sir Leslie Stephen's criticism of Paine's influence on religious and political reform. An indispensable work for all who are interested in Paine and his influence

SIXPENCE

Postage 1d.

## RELIGION AND SEX

CHAPMAN COHEN

Studies in the Pathology of religious development

Price 6s.

Postage 6d.

## THE OTHER SIDE OF DEATH

CHAPMAN COHEN

A critical examination of the belief in a future life, with a study of spiritualism

CLOTH 2s. 6d., postage 2½d.; PAPER 1s. 6d., postage 2d.