

# MAN'S GREATEST ENEMY

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

## Views and Opinions

### Man's Greatest Enemy

Who is the greatest enemy of man? The answer may be given in a single word—Himself. Between man and every other force or condition he is fighting we can foresee an end. Earth, air and sea may be conquered, problem after problem may be solved, the reign of plenty may be established, nationalistic tribalism may follow its present line of degradation until it dies amid the disgust it generates. These are all comparatively superficial difficulties that have to be overcome. But the one constant enemy of mankind, the one that is always being subdued, but never quite destroyed, will be man himself. If evolution were understood, instead of merely being talked about, that statement would be accepted as a mere truism. As things stand it is necessary to offer proof.

To begin with it is plain that the human body is, physically, an adapted structure. It is derived from an earlier one, and it has all the imperfections and makeshift arrangements that belong to an old house that has by a series of devices been brought up to date. Specialists in all directions have dwelt upon the faults of the human body, and how much better it would be for modern usage if it had been built for the existing situation. The curious readers will find plenty of evidence to this end in any first-class textbook of evolution. The eye, the bony skeleton, the number of rudimentary structures existing within the body, all help to realize the patchwork structure of the body of man. The whole justifies the remark put into the mouth of a king of Castile, that if he had been present at the creation he would have moved an amendment. A great deal of the work of the world has consisted in trying to get amendments to what is said to be the work of God.

### Man and his Past

But parallel with the truth that man's physical structure is an adapted structure, there is another,

and even more vital truth that is often overlooked. Man's mentality also represents a continuous adaptation, and like his body carries with it not trails of glory but tendencies inherited from a lower condition of social life. From the aimless groping of the amceba for food to the planned and purposive action of man to the same end there is no break. The last stage is always an outcome of the preceding one. Behind the language of a Shakespeare there lies a trail that leads us back to the animal-like sounds of our earliest ancestors. The last is an expression of what has gone before; different, but in the line of descent, not so different that the ancestry cannot be traced.

There are, however, distinctions that definitely separate a human society from an animal group. As I have pointed out elsewhere, human society is differentiated from animal groups through the formulation of ideas, the creation of customs and the establishment of institutions, all of which are handed on from generation to generation through the medium of a social heredity. There is to-day a general agreement that no great change has taken place in man's physical structure of man for many thousands of years. The schoolboy of to-day has neither a better body nor a better brain than the boys who ran the streets of ancient Egypt. The soldier of to-day is not a better soldier or a braver fighter than the men who marched with Alexander the Great into ancient India. The statesman of to-day is better neither in body nor brain than the statesman of the time of Socrates. Yet the schoolboy can solve problems with ease that an ancient Athenian could not attempt. The soldier can wield powers of which the soldier of ancient times never dreamed; and the statesman has at his command resources that would have seemed miraculous to the statesman of antiquity. Man is the heir of the ages in a sense that has no meaning when applied to the animal world from which man derives. It is this socio-psychological heritage that is the hall mark of human society.

### The Nemesis of Man

There is another feature of human evolution that is of profound importance in dealing with the question in hand. In the animal world such development as takes place meets with no opposition from the group. There is no conscious opposition to change in the animal world. The change, whether it makes for extinction or preservation, goes on without the subjects of it being aware of the process. There is neither a looking backward nor forward. In the case of man there is a very different tale to tell. The proposed change is consciously formulated, for the greater part, at least. And this excites, not merely opposition from others, but also from the individuals themselves. We have to deal here entirely, not with inertia, but with an active resistance to change because it is change. Reform is faced with opposition to reform from within

and without, and the incipient reformer discovers, more often than most people realize, that his hardest fight is against his own impulses. Not only the living members of the society in which he lives, but the dead whom he has been brought up to revere are at war with him. He has to make a break with the past, and the product is often that compromise and rationalizing which lead to excuses for not "following the light," an attempted justification for compromise or silence.

The chief obstacles to development that man has to face are those of his own making. They are internal, not external. They are the product of that mental activity which creates and destroys, and out of the ruins of the old fashions new and better forms of living. The position may be briefly stated, almost in the words of Bagehot, written some seventy years ago. To exist man must first fashion rules of living. That is a hard enough task, but the next step is harder still. He must summon up enough courage to break the rules that are of his own devising. It is this last step that has always involved and still involves the hardest and bitterest of struggles. All the associations that have gathered round cherished institutions and venerated individuals are united in opposition to the man who sets about the work of iconoclasm. The clamour of the foolish crowd, the outcry of threatened vested interests, financial and other, the foolishness that lies behind a misunderstood loyalty, and a patriotism that is more than the unreasoning sentiment of the pack, all these things the reformer will find at work, fully expressed by others, and to some extent operative in himself. It is this conflict between the perception of what is the better, and inherited tendencies that is responsible for the most painful moments in the life of one who fights for better things. In a far deeper and higher sense than the New Testament writer dreamt of a man's foes are indeed those of his own household.

The tragedy of human progress lies just here, in the fact that man's enemies are mainly of his own creation. Create them he must, remove them or modify them he must. The very advance he makes brings him into conflict with the advances he has already made. Every institution that man creates sooner or later blocks the road to further advances, and blocking also the road to their modification or removal are the fears and affections that surround these institutions. It is upon the dead past that the future must be built, but it is also the dead past that forbids the transition from the old to the new. Man is terrified by the ghosts of his own creation. In the early ages of civilization the fear was of the gods. To-day the gods are losing their power, but they have left as a legacy a taboo in the shape of the almost "sacred" character which the unthinking attach to mere custom and to established institutions.

In the recognition of the truth of what has been said lies the justification of a lively and informed scepticism with regard to all established things. I do not mean by this a scepticism which denies the utility of all things established, but one which claims the right to criticize them, and to revise or abolish them when necessary. And to do that we must get rid of the Church-created teaching that it is wrong to question established institutions, of the profoundly immoral and anti-social New Testament teaching that the powers that be are ordained of God. We must get back to the Greek conception that every institution, from king to crossing-sweeper, is no more than an experiment in social life. The centuries that lie between us and the Greeks have established the belief that it is "wrong," morally wrong, to question an established institution. An ancient Athenian might have argued

that an institution was good or bad, but Greek thought never sank to the primitive notion that any questioning of institutions was a moral offence and distasteful to the gods. The Christian notion that rebellion, as rebellion, is a crime was merely the logical application of the Christian teaching that "the sin of blasphemy is of the nature of treason."

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### The Insecurity of Reason

Reason is the instrument by means of which man finds his way about the world. It is the best he has, but it is a long way from being infallible. It leads and it misleads. The division of people into those who believe in following their reason and those who do not is very misleading. A man may follow his reason to illogical conclusions as well as to logical ones. To do the Roman Church justice, it never condemned the use of reason; it was the use of *unlawful* reasoning that was anathema, and this was on the fairly safe ground that reason might as readily mislead as act as a safe guide to truth. Here, the Roman Catholic Church might have met its Freethinking enemies on much nearer their own ground than it did usually. Nature certainly does flatter to deceive. The earth is not flat, although appearances suggest that it is. The stars are not near the earth, although that appears a quite reasonable conclusion to unsophisticated mankind. The world seems full of evil agencies, their activities being somewhat mitigated by the efforts of good ones. The presence of indwelling demons as a cause of disease is quite an attractive theory to savages and certain modern bishops. If there were a God, and if he created the world with a deliberate intention to mislead mankind, that is one effort for which he could certainly claim credit for a considerable measure of success.

Reason thus leads by misleading. We develop a craving for understanding and gratify it by creating misunderstanding. This is no fanciful paradox, it is the expression of a literal truth. For in the end it is the urge of the insatiable desire for more complete understanding and for a more perfect life—which has its roots in dissatisfaction, fed by the conception of something better—that is responsible for human progress. And better still, ends become means here as elsewhere. There is created an independent love of itself, a joy in mere discovery that outweighs a hundred disappointments, and so firmly lays the foundations for further development.

We come back to our main theme. Man's real enemy is himself. Things that are outside him, and form no integral part of him—difficulties of food, climate, geographical position, etc.—are one after the other being mastered. But things to which in terms of his past history he has given birth—the gods and ghosts he has called into being, the taboos he has made, the unreasoning reverence for institutions he has created, these represent forces that tax his power for advancement to the uttermost. And this struggle is unending. For however high the level of human culture may be, the elements of this contest will be there. The past will continue to dog the present and attempt to hold it where it is, and the present will continue to reach forward into the future, seeing visions and dreaming dreams. It is man who creates the conditions of this eternal conflict which will last as long as human nature. For man to destroy these conditions is impossible. He can strive only to understand them, and in understanding them guard against the mischievous action of the creatures of his own brain.

## Towards Democracy

"The very things we boast of will one day be quoted to prove our ignorance."—*Emerson.*

"We shall never enfranchise the world without touching people's superstitions."—*G. W. Foote.*

The clergy are very fond of claiming that our social progress is due to the Christian Religion, and itinerant evangelists, and speakers at Pleasant Sunday Afternoon meetings, repeat the fanciful strain. The claim is the reverse of the truth, and is a piece of clerical impudence. It is correct that the clergy have had a hand in legislation, but the votes of the bishops in the House of Lords show that, during the past hundred years, they have steadily opposed all efforts at progress and social amelioration. Acting under alleged divine inspiration, these prelates stood like a rock against social improvement. Nothing escaped their ever-watchful eyes. They opposed votes for women with the same sturdy determination as they did the provision of seats for tired shop assistants. They were defenders of absolutism, tyranny, slavery, and the barbarous penal code; they were the resolute opponents of every political and social reform. And, in this House of Lords, these bishops came most closely into touch with the nation they pretend to represent.

Professing a "religion of love," these lawn-sleeved legislators supported war on every possible occasion. Whether posterity will judge these wars as just or unjust, the Christian Bishops in the House of Lords have never condemned them. The cause of international arbitration owes little if anything to these bishops of this so-called Church of England. Instead they identified themselves with militarism; blessed the soldiers in their undertakings, and invoked the help of their "god" against the enemy. They christened battleships, blessed regimental flags, and actually allowed priests to act as chaplains in the Army at Officers' pay. Yet, such is the brazen effrontery of Priestcraft, these salaried sons-of-God claim that their two-thousand-years-old superstition is to be credited with England's greatness among the nations, and that Liberty and Fraternity are unknown outside the charmed circle of their ignorance. Christian Religion, forsooth! It is the worship of the Jumping Cat! with its own "Golden Rule":—

"A merciful Providence fashioned us hollow  
In order that we might our principles swallow."

The glory of the nineteenth century in England was not commercial prosperity, but the awakening of the workers to intellectual and social issues. At the opening of the century the condition of the masses was shocking to a degree. Things had scarcely altered since Hogarth had painted his terrible picture, "Gin Alley." Drunkenness was common, wages low, and caste as rigid as that in India. Despite the Church's present-day trick of throwing dust in people's eyes, their attitude in those days was that of actual hostility towards human emancipation. The Church and the governing class were at one in trying to suppress freedom of thought, which they considered was dangerous to their pretensions and vested interests.

A hundred years ago the lion-hearted Thomas Paine was dead, but his ideas were marching on. His books, *The Age of Reason* and *The Rights of Man*, were very much alive, and already known widely. Boldly as Paine might write, his books would have been still-born but for the rare courage of the Freethinkers. And, be it remembered, *The Age of Reason* was the bravest book ever written. It challenged Priestcraft to a duel to the death, and aroused the deadly enmity of all the priests of Christendom, and their satellites. That it was a truly extraordinary

book is proved by the simple fact that it has never stopped selling since the day of its publication, nearly a century and a half ago.

The after-glow of the French Revolution was long seen in our literature. Shelley and Byron are both full of the return to nature and the natural rights of man. Politicians often scoff at poets, but they are deaf to the great warning of Shelley: "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." Recall the appeal written by Shelley in his "Song to the Men of England," over a century ago:—

"Sow seed—but let no tyrant reap;  
Find wealth—let us impostor heap;  
Weave robes—let not the idle wear;  
Forge arms—in your defence to wear."

Indeed, a feeling of estrangement always existed between the old Radicals and Christian Orthodoxy, and this antagonism has been inherited by the present-day Socialists. The modern Labour Movement has never proclaimed, and never sought after, an alliance with the clergy. So evident is this aloofness that, whenever a Trades Union Congress is held, the clergy are certain to break out into hysterical appeals to Labour leaders to remember that "God" and his salaried servants have always been on their side. But, as an old proverb assures us, in vain is the net spread in full sight of the bird. The mere instinct of self-preservation on the part of the Labour leaders prompts other and far safer measures than a close contact with the Black Army of Priestcraft.

Men's memories are short, and the clergy's new-found zeal on behalf of the working-class may deceive numbers of innocent people, as it is craftily calculated that it may. It is far better to attach more importance to what the clergy do than what they say. In their hearts they care as little for the welfare of the workers as the Sultan of Zanzibar for his slaves. In the Ages of faith the Christian Church lacked neither power nor opportunity. And yet they failed to prevent, not only the African slave-trade, but, in the nineteenth century, the slavery of an entire population to a greedy commercialism, which included even women and children among its victims.

Despite clerical denunciation and apprehension, we stand to-day at the porch, even the vestibule, of a new order of society. Meanwhile Christianity recedes, and it loses size and lustre as we get further and further away from its influence. When Freethought began to act in urgent and direct reaction to the aims of Priestcraft, the old order received its notice to quit, but that was years ago, and the change is not yet complete. The reason is that the Christian Superstition is a huge vested interest, entrenched behind mountains of money bags. That is the cause of its continued existence. Disestablish and disendow this Anglican Church, and you will put the chief enemy of Socialism out of action, and release millions of money which can be used to far better purpose than the perpetuation of ancient ignorance, and the obstruction of Democracy.

"We can dare  
And we can conquer, though we may not share  
In the rich quiet of the afterglow."

The world is gradually passing, not away from, but towards, its Golden Age. The movement of the human race is, on the whole, towards good; civilization is not a failure or a sham. We, in our various places and vocations, can do something to accelerate its progress. These are the sentiments which glorify human existence. These, more than any other principles, except only the kindred passion for freedom, have characterized in all ages the free and generous souls who have led the onward march of humanity. Listen to this poem of Thomas Hardy's, which embodies the feel-

ings of the pioneers who are seeking the betterment of their race:—

“Whence comes solace? Not from seeing  
What is doing, suffering, being;  
Not from noting life's conditions,  
Not from heeding Times' monitions;  
But in cleaving to the dream  
And in gazing at the gleam  
Whereby grey things golden seem.”

MIMNERMUS.

## The Inception of the Roman State

IN the fourth century, B.C., the arts of life had attained a superior stage of development in the Grecian world, and its affluence was apparently unimpaired. Yet, politically the Greek communities were in process of disintegration and decay at the very time when a rural Mediterranean State was increasing both in power and prosperity. On the seven hills and their adjoining territories, tribes long inimical were uniting to form a nucleus, of what afterwards became an Empire that practically embraced the then known civilized world. Greek colonists and traders had long since introduced the refinements of life into Italy and its adjacent islands and now, in the fourth century, B.C., a risen Rome had to be reckoned with as a great Mediterranean Power, while two centuries later, the Italian State virtually dictated the public policy of the East, and Greece was subjected to its sway.

That the Greeks never seriously attempted, much less succeeded in, establishing a consolidated Hellenic State is one of the paradoxes of history. Yet, she failed despite her superb creative capacity; rich treasury; geographical and racial advantages. Even when a nominal Empire was founded by Alexander it crumbled to pieces with his death. Perhaps the ingrained individualism of the Greek character which so largely accounts for their independence of thought, as well as their artistic glories and intellectual triumph, tended to deny them that imperious organizing power essential to the evolution of a State so stable as that established by the practical Roman Community. For Rome herself was once a City State: a mere variant of what Athens and Sparta never ceased to be.

The scribes, statesmen and philosophers of ancient times were profoundly impressed by the continual progress of Roman penetration in every direction. In the second century B.C., the Greek historian, Polybius, recorded Rome's military triumphs, and he and other contemporary observers were inclined to trace her irresistible advance to the virtues of her citizens and the superior character of the Roman Constitution which they regarded as one realizing the ideal foreshadowed by Plato in departed days. An explanation based on a palpable exaggeration of the moral grandeur and civic virtues of the Roman people, a more discriminating posterity was constrained to dismiss.

It is now obvious that Rome's remarkable achievements were chiefly attributable to the material circumstances of Italian life which had remained in constant operation during many preceding centuries. Unfortunately, the dawning time of Roman civilization is shrouded in uncertainty. The Greek colonists then in Sicily and Italy gave little heed to their neighbours until a much later period, and the many manuscripts then written by Greek scribes settled there have either completely disappeared or have survived in pitiful fragments only. Timæus, a Greek author resident in Sicily who died in the third century B.C., gathered all that was known or surmised concerning the past history of the several Italian clans, and later Roman chroniclers have preserved fragments of this work to the benefit of modern times.

The native traditions of ancient Italy were subse-

quently revised and amplified by Roman antiquarians, and these are, of course, untrustworthy. Professor Rostovtzeff, in his *Ancient World: Rome* (Vol. II., Oxford University Press), observes that: “The Italian tribes had hardly any contemporary records of historical incidents. The art of writing was late in reaching them, and was little used to perpetuate the memory of events. There was one race resident in Italy, which might have created an earlier historical tradition: but these were the Etruscans who spoke and wrote a language which was unintelligible to most Italians and even to the learned men of Rome. Nor, indeed, is it probable that Etruscan tradition went far back or deserved much credit, for very few Etruscan texts preserved on stone are older than the fourth century B.C.”

These inscriptions, although engraved in Greek characters, are at present undeciphered, save for a few proper names and words. But when the key to their interpretation is discovered, this, with the aid of the very numerous monuments and relics preserved in Etruscan graves and prehistoric cities, will enable antiquarians to reproduce a fair picture of the past.

Ancient investigators themselves were perplexed when they attempted to reconstruct Italy's early history. The casual observations of Greek chroniclers; Etruscan traditions, celebrated in old songs; surviving social and religious customs, and early records were the main sources of their information. These slender materials plainly precluded the production of any reputable history of Italian origins.

But much as spurious pedigrees are constructed for newly-ennobled personages who are anxious to trace their descent from some illustrious ancestor, so the Romans when they had climbed into power desired to emulate other leading States already provided with a romantic record dating from immemorable ages. Thus, Roman annals were extended to the time of the Trojan War itself. Legendary and even mythical heroes were utilized whenever required. Inventive writers created new characters hitherto quite unknown, even traditionally, whose remarkable exploits were recorded in every detail. These renowned men were mendaciously depicted as mighty pioneers who had “raised Rome above her neighbours and devised the Roman constitution.” Critical studies of these records, however, disclose a dim outline of the political, administrative and religious conditions of Rome from 600 B.C. onwards, but beyond this era all is conjectural.

Archæology and ethnology, however, render greater aid. Primitive culture in Italy dates back to the Old Stone Age, and its later progress was immensely influenced by geographical conditions. The Italian peninsula is protected in the north by the Alps, while both the large streams of Central Europe—the Rhine and the Rhone—rise in the Alpine area. Wandering tribes were easily able to follow the courses of these rivers to the passes over the mountains that led into Italy, and then proceed along the valleys of the various tributaries of the Po, and thus reach the fertile Italian plain. The Danube district also sent colonizers to settle in prehistoric Italy.

The Appennine range which traverses the peninsula from north to the extreme south is intersected by many wooded and grass-grown valleys which provide plentiful pasture for livestock, while on the banks of the Tiber—the only navigable stream in Central Italy—Rome, the future mistress of the world was born. Italy's destiny was largely determined by her climate, richness of soil, fine harbours, such as those of Naples and Genoa, and western aspect of her choicest agricultural land.

Still, Italy's eastern coastline played its part in her history. The important river Po flows into the Adriatic Sea, and a series of isles connects her with

western Greece. Ever open to invasion over land from the north, her prolonged coastline rendered her accessible to plundering sea-rovers from east and south. Long envied and admired as the garden of Europe, small wonder that Italy proved attractive to immigrants from many climes and lands.

Apparently, the aborigines of Italy were Ligurians and Iberians, who were closely related to the native peoples of Gaul and Spain. These original settlers were ultimately submerged by Indo-European invaders from Central Europe, who introduced into their adopted country the lake village settlements once numerous in Switzerland and other regions. The remains of many of these prehistoric pile dwellings have been recovered from the lake districts of Northern Italy. In later generations these lake dwellers abandoned their aquatic abodes and proceeded to erect habitations on firm land. These they strove to safeguard against attack by surrounding them with earthen ramparts which were in turn encircled by a moat. Such seem to have been the earliest Italian fortified dwelling places which were erected by a race that first arrived in Italy in the period of copper and bronze—the Early Metal Epoch.

During a later stage in the dawning Iron Age these immigrants were succeeded by various other Aryan clans, who erected habitations of a fortified character on upland sites. These afforded shelter and protection both for man and his domesticated animals. These newcomers carried superior implements and weapons which enabled them to drive the native population and the lake-dwellers into less favoured localities. Inter-mingling with one another and with the earlier inhabitants, they gradually spread themselves over the whole territory to its furthest southern limits. Ultimately, these adventurers segregated into three groups each distinguished by differing dialects of a language closely related to the Celtic tongue.

These three divisions developed into the Latins, Umbrians and Samnites of history. The Latins settled in the lower regions of the Tiber Valley; the Umbrians in Northern Italy; and the Samnites took possession of the southern hills and vales.

But these settlements were soon disturbed. Seafarers from Illyrian regions came to annex the river valleys of Apulia and the Venetian plains, which comprised the most productive areas of the eastern districts. Then, about 1,000 B.C., the western coast, apart from the Tiber's lower reaches, was subjugated by maritime invaders. The Italian population of the northern districts was either compelled to seek safety in the mountains, or submit to enslavement by the Etruscans who appear to have migrated from Anatolia in Asia. After the eighth century B.C., energetic Greek colonists settled in many parts of Italy's southern and western coastlands. Then came the Celts to add further admixture to the previously highly interblended population. These Celts—the Gauls of Roman writers—were intimately related in blood to the earlier Italians and followed their example in invading Italy from the north. The place of origin was Gaul, now France, and their settlements very probably extended to the Danube Valley. In Italy they established themselves in the basin of the river Po, from which fertile territory the Etruscans were driven to depart.

Thus, the problems of Italian ethnology are decidedly complex. For, not only since the beginnings of history has the peninsula been overrun by repeated invasion, but in later times, when Rome became the cosmopolitan capital of the world, the Eternal City and its surrounding districts became the home of countless peaceful immigrants as well as that of a large slave population drawn from every part of the far-flung Empire.

T. F. PALMER.

## Debunking the Philosophers

We have always been taught to look with a certain amount of reverence, mingled with awe, upon the philosopher. He is supposed to soar in a region far above ordinary mortals. A kind of magic is connected with the title, and we are apt to accept his findings as a matter of course.

It is refreshing, then, to find they are only human after all. They draw false conclusions and follow will-o'-the-wisps like Tom or Dick or even Harry. These men whom we regarded as chief repositories of unfailing truth, turn out masses of contradictory opinions. They advance and retreat. They assert and are refuted. Really, it would seem as if these gentlemen are merely engaged in making shrewd guesses.

A few weeks ago the Editor of the *Freethinker* recommended a book recently published. As it happened that same book has just come into my possession. Knowing the genuine critical faculty possessed by our Editor, I turned to it with interest. It is a book by Stuart Chase, and the title is, *The Tyranny of Words*. One can well understand why such a book should appeal to one who is himself a master of criticism; one who can expose shallow sophisms; one who has the unerring faculty of being able to put his finger on a false argument, and expose its absurdity. How many of us envy the clarity and the lucidity always evidenced in the writings of Mr. Cohen. We all admit it, and there is no reason why he shouldn't be told.

Every social reformer should take a course with Stuart Chase. His keenness for using the right word, and his exposure of sham arguments based on abstractions are a joy to read. All kinds of would-be mentors are placed in the pillory. Economists, Judges, Philosophers, Scientists, Statesmen and Politicians of all brands come under his scalpel. He even shows scant respect for Stuart Chase himself. Such terms as land, labour capitalism, purchasing power, law of supply and demand, free competition, democracy, life, space, time, good, bad, heaven, hell, eternity, are faithfully explored, and they generally turn out to be mere figments of the imagination.

Our misuse of words lead to all kinds of intolerance, misunderstandings, jealousies, war. Our statesmen and ambassadors in every country should be forced to read the *Tyranny of Words*. "Semantics" is the name given to this study of words used in communication of ideas. The author seems much indebted to *The Meaning of Meaning*, by Ogden, and *Mathematics for the Million*, by Prof. Hogben. He freely draws upon many of the foremost thinkers of our time.

He is especially insistent on the use of the "Referent" in tracking down a superstition. A triangle setting forth our mind-processes shows that we seldom get back to the thing in itself. We misuse abstractions and great words roll back and forward between reflection and symbol, or phrase, without applying the test of the "referent." And so "sublime" becomes "good," and "liberty" merges into "individualism," "racial purity" into "totalitarianism." We want, if possible, to get down to bedrock on all subjects, and, if anything is stated to be "good" we ought to know what, where, when. Mr. Cohen once adduced the case of Socrates in his questing for truth about the "good." Was it good for something? if not, then it was good for nothing.

To show the merciless nature of the criticisms in this book, let me quote a passage from an aspiring Hitler with Chase's translation.

"The Aryan Fatherland, which has nursed the souls of heroes, calls upon you for the supreme sacri-

fice which you, in whom flows heroic blood, will not fail, and which will echo for ever down the corridors of history."

This becomes:—

"The Blab Blab, which has nursed the blabs of blabs, calls upon you for the blab blab which you, in whom flows blab blood, will not fail, and which will echo blab down the blabs of blab."

I must think of this passage next time I hear a wordy politician declare fervently "that Providence never intended mankind to be subjected to such and such." I shall wonder how he has discovered what Providence is, and how he should be so familiar with its intentions, and what precisely is meant by mankind.

There are many examples of great men being obsessed by curious notions of their own. Hegel—whose name carries weight among subjects philosophic—wrote upbraiding the scientists for discovering the eighth planet Ceres. Philosophy, he said, had established seven as the only possible number. He must have been mesmerized by Pythagoras, who, though a mighty man in his day, had a weakness for sevens and eevens.

Aristotle too, seems to have been a stumbling-block to scientific progress for centuries. If Aristotle said so, it must be right. Consequently when he declared a fly had eight legs, his followers for centuries were content to follow. He was wrong too with his theory that heavy bodies fall faster than light bodies. We had to wait for Galileo to correct the error. Plato was scornful of scientific enquiry, and he endorsed some quaint ideas concerning the starry heavens wrought on a visible background. Plato was fond of absolutes, "The One," "The Good," "The Idea of Good." These were pardonable in his day, and they are difficult to root out even to-day, in our universities. Observe how the Schoolmen of the Middle Ages wrangled about the "Number of the Beast," and how many angels could dance on the point of a needle. Even Newton—who should have known better—went a-chasing numbers in the Book of Daniel.

The book gives much food for thought in the sociological field. Malthus, John Stuart Mill, Spencer, are all convicted of looseness of language, and false deductions. Judges are condemned for insisting on the letter of old laws. Business men have wrong notions as to credit. Preachers are indicted for their ferocity in time of war.

And so we find many great names of the past cancel each other out. Plato condemned the Sophists. Aristotle confuted the dialectic of Plato. Bacon denounced Aristotle's formal demonstration. Mill deplored Bacon's inductive method. Locke demolished Herbert, Hume demolished Locke, and Morris Cohen demolished Hume. Borodin demolishes Descartes and various moderns wipe their boots on Herbert Spencer. It would seem as if a tragic fate attended all intellectual movements. Yet, in the opinion of the author, the study of Semantics will help us out of the morass. "There is no perfect 'truth,' 'happiness,' 'Heaven,' 'peace.' To rely upon them is to feel hopeful before being destroyed. Look to the context. Find the referent. What is true about this? What is useful about that? What possibilities of survival and happiness may be found here? Not up in the Beyond—here! With this open-mindedness, flexibility, scepticism, perhaps man can find many more things which are true, which bring a measure of peace and happiness, than were ever assumed in an abstract Heaven. Age-old disagreements will continue until we make the language of science part of the language of mankind; until human reason faces the task of rationally planning the instruments of communication."

ALAN TYNDAL.

## The Elysian Fields

CHRISTIAN: "In the middle ages, when the greater part of the world's surface was unknown, it was generally believed that somewhere in the East there was an earthly paradise, a beautiful land affording eternal peace and happiness for all able to reach it. What pleasure the idea must have given the ancient mariners, fortified by the belief that they might someday in their voyaging reach the Elysium and partake of its precious fruits! They must have been more cheerful than the present generation of sailors bound down by the knowledge that there are no happier lands in this planet awaiting discovery."

Sceptic: "I do not agree. The modern mariner knows that this terrestrial paradise was merely a product of the imagination, and with this knowledge he is a happier man than his predecessor. At one time it was generally thought that the world was flat. Are we not happier now that we know it is round? In certain circumstances ignorance may possibly be temporary bliss, but as an instrument for promoting permanent mental contentment knowledge is supreme."

C.: "There may be truth in what you say, nevertheless I maintain that the expectation of a reward, even if it never materializes, adds to one's enjoyment of life."

S.: "It depends on whether or not there is a reasonable chance of reaping the reward. I admit that ventures in, say, football pools, afford enjoyment to those who indulge in them because they know there is a definite possibility of securing a prize. What I have in mind are the various Christian sects, all expecting a rich reward in a hypothetical heaven. These are in a different category for their conception of a heavenly reward is but an idle fantasy based on no stronger evidence than the ancients possessed for the existence of their earthly paradise."

C.: "Instead of the Christian heaven being a myth, as you suggest, I contend that it is an established fact."

S.: "That surely must be because, like the overwhelming majority of Christians, you have not studied any of the destructive criticism of the Bible, a criticism which cannot be refuted. Having read many of the works of eminent heterodox writers I am satisfied that the case for historic Christianity is as weak as was the foundation of the ancient mariner's elysian vision. If you could muster sufficient courage to study these works I am sure you would agree with me."

C.: "I cannot say that I have myself noticed it, but I often see statements, mainly by the clergy, that Freethinkers are invariably unhappy, a fact usually detected from their lugubrious countenances."

S.: "This is merely one of their numerous artifices to uphold the decaying creeds. Personally I feel happy and contented with my acquired knowledge, and have no desire to revert to my former state of ignorance, a state of mind which, I am sure, reflects the attitude of the vast majority of Freethinkers throughout the world. Indeed, I venture to say that they, like myself, feel ashamed to think that at one time they actually believed the biblical absurdities taught them in their youth."

PRO REASON.

The suffering of his neighbour no longer disturbs man's pleasure, and even the thought that mankind might cease to exist with the present generation, would not cause society to change a mode of living in which the individual can be temporarily comfortable.

Max Nordau, "Conventional Lies," 1895.

## Acid Drops

The *News-Chronicle*, in its issue for August 9, publishes the news—substantiated by documentary evidence, it says—of the deaths of eighty-seven Jews in the concentration camp of Buchenwald during July. The youngest was 21, the oldest over 70. These men are kept at quarrying and stone-breaking for fourteen hours each day. If a man faints at his work a bucket of cold water is thrown over him, and if he does not recover his companions may carry him back to his sleeping quarters. Any breach of discipline is met with flogging, the usual number being fifty strokes. Usually the victim dies under the punishment, in any case he dies soon after, with very few exceptions.

There is nothing very new in this, it is going on, more or less, in all parts of Germany. We commend it to those trippers who are tempted by cheap holidays, and who return, some of them saying how much Hitler has done for Germany—he has built some fine roads. That these fine roads are cemented with the blood of men, women and children, whose offence is that of being born, that this brutality is part and parcel of the German system of government, and that their cheap holidays are going to the support of this brutality, never seems to occur to the trippers. We do not suppose that this item of news will surprise Lord Halifax or Lord Londonderry, and his kind. But we do call the attention of Mr. Chamberlain and Sir John Simon to it, as they appear to be unaware of the facts. It is a pity to see good men so deceived.

The Spanish War began in July, 1936. In August, 1938, the Government has appointed a commission to discover whether there is any bombing going on in Spain. One cannot expect any definite report for two or three months. The Government will then consider the report, which must take some time, and will probably ask for further information. The next step, somewhere about January or February, will be to submit the finding to General Franco and ask for his observations. After Franco has consulted Mussolini he will probably reply, about May next, that the evidence is inconclusive, and that no such bombing has taken place. About July the Government will publish the statement that the reply of Franco is not very satisfactory, and that greater care should be exercised. After one or two more communications, the general public will wonder what the row is about as the war had come to an end some months before, and the less said about it the better.

The history of the Oaths question will not be complete without some allusion to such incidents as happened a few days ago at Wolverhampton. A girl of fourteen was married in a church to a man of 31. This marriage was an illegal act, performed by a clergyman, whose name is suppressed, which has been declared null and void by the Wolverhampton magistrates. The *Daily Herald* report says:—

The vicar who conducted the wedding, said the officer, made every effort to discourage it, and made the man and the girl's father swear affidavits that she was 16.

Now those affidavits cost considerably more money than the easily available and conclusive Birth Certificate. Why on earth should anybody ask for obviously suspect Oaths to be made by two persons in order to swear to something which, if accurate, was a waste of money, and which, if contradicting the official birth-certificate, must have been perjured? Is the Oath so sacred and so desirable that it can be called into repudiation of the legal birth certificate? In any case we commend this proof—if proof were needed—that the Registrar's Office is a greater ethical protection than a Church ceremony.

Unlike Sir John Reith, who was always reticent, the new Director-General of the B.B.C., Mr. F. W. Ogilvie, aired some of his views to the press at his home in Belfast. There was nothing definite or enlightening about them. He stated that he "never felt moral indignation at any programme broadcast by the B.B.C.," he thought "people welcome a certain amount of controversy"; and

he proclaims himself to be "an inveterate believer in the truth." It remains to be seen what value of truth lies in Mr. Ogilvie's protestation of truth, for, if he is sincere, the opinions of Freethinkers and Atheists will be offered fair hearing on the air.

But some things make us doubt. The following testimony, for example. It is from the *Methodist Recorder*:—

It is a matter for real thankfulness that the new Director-General is one who fully appreciates spiritual values. It would have been a calamity if there had been any curtailment of the very fine provision of religious services over the air . . . on Sundays, morning and evening, on Thursdays, afternoon and evening, and every week-day morning.

Had the latest "God" (known to his worshippers also as Father Divine) lived 2,000 years ago, no doubt quite a number of piquant gospels would have been written about him. As it is, the crass materialism of our modern age—an age which has lost the beautiful and primitive simplicity of Bible times when Faith was an all-powerful impulse, and the sneering sceptic was promptly liquidated—is more apt to gurgle with laughter at another new "Deity." Seventy-five thousand believers in Father Divine turned up the other day in Harlem for a "Jubilant" Parade, that is, to celebrate the gift of a kind of "promised land" of 500 acres by one of "God's" admirers. This is, of course, quite like similar gifts in other religions. During the procession one of the "Angels," Miss Hopeful Joy, fell off her white charger, and other Angels—this time, male—staged impromptu dances—again reminding one of the newly-made converts to other religions. Finally, "God" and his "Apostles" held a private meeting in "heaven," which is situated in Lenox Avenue. The almost inspired account of the proceedings appears beautifully Biblical.

This American God, Father Divine, has for some time had a rival, who was making as good a thing out of the divinity business as the original one. But something has happened. God number two has been killed in an aeroplane accident. Both Fr. Divine and his black followers will, we imagine, take this as a further proof that they have the true deity, and that the other was very poor imitation.

The latest freak in Germany is to haul a man before the courts for naming a child "Joshua." The father explained that this name is part of a family tradition. The court was obdurate. It must be given up. The court decided it was a Jewish name. But Joshua is only another form of Jesus. So we imagine that, as Germany has created a new history, and invented a new race, "Aryans," Jesus will probably be changed for "Hans," or "Adolph."

Traffic in dope is being carried on hidden in the bindings of Bibles, New Testaments, Talmuds, Prayer-books, and other devotional works, according to the *People's* account. London is said to be its headquarters. These revelations follow the arrest and confession of Rabbi Isaac Leifer, who told the French police that he acted innocently under the instructions of the "Great Chief," whom he only knew by the name of Jacob. But why insert mere chemical dope in Bibles, etc., which contain a far more potent dope of their own?

Mr. Beverley Baxter, M.P., in the paper referred to above, "went all ga-ga"—as the modern slang has it—over the return of the King and Queen from France. The royal train came in at Victoria, we read, "as if it knew that it was an aristocrat among its fellows." Doesn't that prove the miraculous and divine afflation accompanying royalty? We read further that "the little crowd" privileged to be on the platform, "began to encroach upon the *sacred carpet*" (our italics), to get a glimpse of the royal pair, but then felt "more and more that we were intruders upon a purely domestic scene." Mr. Baxter need have no qualms that vulgarity is noticeable on such occasions.

Alleged persecution of religion prompts the Countess of Oxford and Asquith to write to the press, saying: "The murder of man is passing, and punished, but the murder of mind is abiding: it is a slow poison which corrodes civilization, and should be fought day in and day out by even the least religious." Evidently our "Margot" hasn't heard of the *Freethinker* and the National Secular Society, which have been, from their foundations, "fighting the good fight" for which she calls. A more apt description of religion, as "a slow poison which corrodes civilization," could not be given. And under its dispensation we don't see with Lady Oxford, that "the murder of man is passing." But it *will*, if we once cease "the murder of the mind" by transmissions of ancient and savage superstitions.

The Countess claims that "All we have inherited of beauty has been inspired by religion—pictures, literature, art, oratory, cathedrals and shrines." "Inspired by religion" is utterly false. The early painters were driven to "choose" religious subjects because their work was under the commission or patronage of ecclesiasticism. When freed from that control, they indulged in profane and natural themes. Nay, even when under church patronage their models were necessarily all-human, as witness the buxom wenches figured as "Marys," and the chubby babes who stood for the "holy child" one sees in the galleries of old masters. Literature was likewise "made to order," and its highest achievement under religion was in illuminated manuscripts. Art was largely confined to the portrayal of horrors depicting death and damnation.

Books like *The Bible As Literature* encourage indiscriminate praise of the merits of ALL Bible stories. Of course there are great Crime Stories in that weird collection of yarns. Some of these are the "Bluggy" story of David—the original Jack the Giant Killer. Of this sort the horrific episode of Jael the Tent-peg Murderess at least has a "thrill" in it. But the editor of the *British Weekly*—which used to be a "literary" journal under Robertson-Nicholl—gives pride of place in a recent issue, to the ghastly and loathsome story of Uzzah. Uzzah was killed by Yahweh (2 Sam. vi.) for putting out his hand to steady the "ark," when that precious Box of Holiness (including phallic objects) was shaken by the stumbling of the oxen. That a man should be murdered for an act of courtesy meets with no disapproval by our editor who "improves the occasion" thus:—

Further, it will have been a good thing to have felt the shock of this short story if it reminds us of how one thing leads on to another and how there are actions of such a kind that to have *begun* them, to have touched them, as it were—as Uzzah laid his hand upon the ark—is something which, unrebuked where it is observed, may let loose in others a daring and licentious spirit.

So the Lord killed Uzzah merely to illustrate what would happen to them if they touched the Jewish tabooed object. The correct analogue would be for the Government to hang a man, say once a month, in order to show what would happen if anyone commits murder.

A "new interpretation" of the Book of Job (by T. W. Phillips, B.A.) declines to regard Job as "God's Perfect Man." Mr. Phillips refuses to say Job was even a good man. He calls him indeed "a self-righteous Pharisee." Job's name—written variously "Iyob," "Jobab," "Aiab," and otherwise—is very amusingly stated by the *Encyclopedia Biblica* to be that of a historical person . . . "but whether he actually said or did what is related of him," is quite a different question! The writer of the Epistle of St. James was probably sarcastic about the historicity of the Book of Job when he said: "Ye have HEARD of the patience of Job."

The *Universe* reports that in Ireland and Scotland the police are searching for a man posing as a Catholic priest, and who is engaged in "seeking Mass intentions" from priests in aid of a foreign missionary society. It seems the wanted man is a confidence trickster. We can understand the annoyance of the Catholic priests in the matter. It looks like a case of what the American calls "museleing in"—one gangster poaching on another gangster's

preserve. So much of the Roman Church is sheer confidence trickery, that competition naturally arouses resentment.

Is there, for example, any moral or intellectual difference between the Roman Church gaining money by saying masses for the dead, taking money for getting people an improvement in their position in life, curing people of sickness by appeals and prayers to the saints, and so forth, and the man who sells an electric belt, or a worthless box of pills for the cure of disease, or one who takes money for curing disease through the medium of spirits? Any one of these fakirs may bring forward evidence that their patients have benefited by their treatment, and any doctor, if honest, will admit that there are scores of complaints that may be cured, or lessened in their severity by "faith," and also admit that whether it be faith in Jesus or hairs plucked from the tail of a black cat, makes not the slightest difference. The difference between the Church and the cases named is that the State legalizes the Church practice, and doctors remain silent for various reasons. The better one is the lack of understanding on the part of patients, the lower one, for fear of giving offence.

A Baptist minister, the Rev. J. Iver Wensley, of Deal, invites holiday-makers to attend his services, not caring "whether you are bare-backed or in trousers so long as you are decently dressed. Hatless or stockingless women, or men in open-neck shirts and flannels—it makes no difference to me." Snacks in the aisles and drinks in the vestry would be further attractions, Mr. Wensley, wouldn't they? Don't be forestalled in seeking a full license to dispense intoxicating liquors: it's in the minds of some of your brethren, you know. After all the essence of Mr. Wensley's message is, "I don't care how you come or why you come, so long as you come."

A Congregational minister, the Rev. C. Leslie Atkins, of Purley, relates in a Sunday newspaper, a story of a man who, "bordering on suicide," through the receipt of poison-letters, and the circulation of malicious stories about him, sought help from a brother minister. But a woman had called first on the minister—a church member too!—who confessed to writing poisoned letters. Each party produced letters complained of, and comparison proved the woman to be the writer and the man the victim. The sequel was that the two were brought together, and—"they are now married to each other!" 'Tis said that "marriage is a holy union," but this seemed to promise a holy rumpus in after-days. However, the joke is that this very same story, in all details, was related by another minister in the same paper some time ago!

Ancient Order of Foresters, discussing initiation ritual at Chatham, debated a "sign" ceremonial stating: "Tradition affirms that it is emblematic of the act of our legendary mother, Eve, in plucking, eating, and offering to Adam the forbidden fruit," etc. A South Wales member (it would be a Welshman!) objected to the word "legendary" as applied to Eve. Following the usual clash between fundamentalism and reason, the gathering decided not to adopt the new ritual. As Christians can be damned unpleasant even in a brotherhood, the rejection may count as a step towards courage and sense triumphing against religious dictatorship.

### [Fifty Years Ago

BISHOP HINDS once resigned the see of Norwich because he was too honest to teach what he disbelieved, but such an occurrence is like the flowering of the fabled aloe, it happens only once in several generations. Rarer still is the resignation of a church dignitary because he abhors luxury while the poor are starving. There may have been such a case; we are not prepared to deny its possibility; but we do not remember one, and we feel certain none has occurred in our time.

The *Freethinker*, August 12, 1888



# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

To Advertising and Circulating the *Freethinker*.—J. A. P. Ballachee, 108.

E. SYERS.—Thanks. We felt decidedly better for the few days by the sea. Did not recognize how much we needed it until we returned home.

J. MCKENZIE.—We note your suggestion. Some years ago we tried the experiment of compiling an index to the yearly volumes of the *Freethinker*. But after a few years we discontinued it. There did not seem enough demand to justify the increased expenditure. And when one is working always at a deficit, one has to exercise caution.

Those readers who have asked for tickets for the International Conference will receive an answer in due course.

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

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

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

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

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

## Sugar Plums

This is not exactly a "Sugar Plum," but there is no other part of the paper in which it would be more suitable. On Monday last (August 8) we paid a flying visit to our old and valued friend, Sydney Gimson, of Leicester. He has been ill for some time, and now he is confined to his room and, as he wrote us a little time back, "waiting impatiently for the end." Knowing him as we do, we were not surprised to find him the Sydney Gimson we have always known—cheerful, quite open to what faces him, and with his thoughts full of concern for others and, above all, for the future of the Freethought movement, with which he has been associated during the whole of his long life. We have always valued his friendship and his confidence in us, and we left his room feeling proud of it. If a man may be known by the friends he makes—and keeps—we have every reason to be gratified in his friendship.

We said that this was not exactly a "Sugar Plum," but on reflection we are not so certain. It is something that inspires one to see a man facing the inevitable with his head up, his mind as clear as ever, with the quick sense of humour, winning smile and clear vision that numbers have known and valued. Sydney Gimson has always been one of whom our movement might feel proud. I think he would be the first to say that he owes something of what is best in him to Freethought.

Viscount Corvedale (born Oliver Baldwin, son of the ex-Prime Minister), writes in an illustrated daily: "Perhaps one of the greatest deterrents to enlistment is the knowledge that on Sunday the soldier will be forced to go to church, and if his religion is neither non-existent or one of the less popular ones, he is forthwith dubbed 'C. of E.' and marched off to be turned rapidly and easily into an Agnostic. Church parades are relics of the days when even in civil life church-going was compulsory,

and it is a denial of elementary religious liberty to force people to worship, especially if the particular form is alien to their own beliefs." What a fall in numerical "attachments" to the established church there would be if the "C.E.'s" of the army—and of the gaols—were given the option of church attendance!

Writing in high praise of our "Views and Opinions" for July 31, Mr. T. W. Reynolds thinks we have somewhat strained the significance of the passage from the King's speech at the unveiling of the monument to the Australians who died in France during the war. He does not like our linking the sentiment expressed there with the teachings of Fascism concerning war. Well, here is the passage from the speech. The war, said the writer of the speech read by the King, was

the gateway through which Australia passed from youth to manhood.

And here is a passage from a statement by Mussolini, repeated many times in equivalent terms:—

War alone brings up to the highest tension and puts the stamp of nobility upon the people who have the courage to meet it.

Read again with the utmost care, we quite fail to discern any difference between the two passages. Had the passage read that the Australians proved their manhood by their readiness to fight for freedom, the whole meaning of the passage would have been different. War may prove what degree of courage has been developed in a people, but to assert that a nation ever does more in war than display and exploit qualities developed during peace, is to misread the significance of social evolution. The inference from the teaching is that peace leads to decay.

We regret to hear of the imprisonment of Marcus Graham in a Los Angeles jail, to be followed by his deportation from America under a 19-year-old Order. In 1919 this man's sentence of deportation was held up. Since then he has edited a Freethought-anarchist paper called *Man*. We are not Anarchists nor are we Fascists, but we believe that ALL forms of thought ought to be allowed expression equally with our own. A very influential committee has been formed in U.S.A. to press the protest against the persecution of Graham. We hope they will protest effectively. By the way the motto of *Man* is Wendell Phillips' fine phrase: "If there is anything that cannot bear free thought—LET IT CRACK."

Mr. John Seibert, Hon. Sec. of the South London Branch, wishes to call the attention of those interested to his change of address, which is 107 Helix Road, Brixton, S.W.2. Syllabus of Indoor Meetings can be obtained from him on enquiry.

The scope of *The History of Corporal Punishment*, by Ryley Scott (Werner Laurie, 10s.), is best expressed in the sub-title, "A survey of flagellation in its historical, anthropological and sociological aspects." It is, of course, common knowledge among students of the subject that flagellation and the infliction of corporal punishment has a much more unpleasant side to it than mistaken sense of correction, or even as an exhibition of mere physical brutality. And as in the case of the ordinary man what he is conscious of is a mere superficial knowledge of his own more deeply imbedded motives, so in the case of the law, these hidden impulses receive the sanction of authority and are rationalized as a mere desire for "law and order." In studying this aspect of the matter there is, of course, always a danger that the searcher for concealed or disguised motives may find them everywhere, and what may often be adequately described as due to the manners of the age are ascribed to the sadistic eroticism of numbers of individuals, but Mr. Scott steers a middle course here, and is to be congratulated on it. The book ends with a lengthy enquiry into the case for and against corporal punishment. Freethinkers will find the chapters on flagellation in the Bible, and amongst the religious orders, male and female, of special interest. There are a number of illustrations, taken from old engravings, in the book.

## William Huntington's Love Affair

ON July 8, 1938, the *Yorkshire Evening Post* published an article by Mr. Claud Golding, entitled "William Huntington: An Eccentric Preacher." This recorded the wonderful success of Huntington in getting the Lord to give him all sorts of things that he prayed for; and it also described his singular way of preaching. But no reference was made to a romantic love affair which in early life caused him to become a fugitive, and to change his name, thus starting the series of events which in early life led first to his Effectual Call, and then to his assumption of the ministry. Mr. Golding, however, observes, "It is said that Huntington's name had originally been Hunt, and that he changed it because he was illegitimate." But the story of the amorous adventure, and the reasons for the change of name, are explicitly related by Huntington himself in a style that would have warmed the heart of John Bunyan, and roused the envy of Daniel Defoe.<sup>1</sup> Since we learn from Huntington's memorial tablet that he "entered into the joy of his Lord on July 1, 1813, in the 60th year of his age," 1743 was the year of his birth. He gives "Cranbrook in the Weald of Kent" as the place of his "nativity"<sup>2</sup>; and says, "my mother's husband (my father that should have been) was a poor, quiet, God-fearing man, who was shut out of his own bed for years by a wretch that defiled both his wife and his bed."<sup>3</sup> "I am the offspring of double adultery. Barnabas Russel was certainly my father; yea, he has owned it. I am his very image, and bear every feature of him; he secretly owned me as his child; it was he who put me to school; every person in the place of my nativity used to laugh at me, and call me young Barnet."<sup>4</sup>

"My mother bore eleven children, of which I am the tenth, and our eternal High Priest has condescended to take me as a tythe of the family." Isa. vi. 13; Luke xvii. 17.<sup>5</sup> He says that Hunt, his mother's husband, was "a day-labourer," earning a wretched "pittance"; and that Russel, his father who was "a farmer," got him into a Free School, where he "only learned to write a little, and to read in the New Testament," arithmetic, and even regular spelling, being out of the course.<sup>6</sup> It was about the age of seven or eight years that personal experience first led him to believe in prayer as a means for procuring material benefits.<sup>7</sup> This belief was frequently confirmed in his youth, although he had various doubts and fears, and even entertained Deistical sentiments; for he was not favoured with the grace of Effectual Calling until a few years after his marriage.<sup>8</sup> Great was the destitution of the poor in those days! As little boy and growing lad, he had many a hard job to earn a mere

<sup>1</sup> The Select Works of the late Rev. William Huntington S.S. [5 vols.] London. John Bennett. Three-Tun-Passage. Ivy Lane, Paternoster Row. 1837.

The principal incubations in the first volume are: (a) "God the Guardian of the Poor and the Bank of Faith." (b) "The Kingdom of Heaven Taken by Prayer." This includes (c) "The Life of the Author," written by himself. From these writings—especially from the one last-named—all the facts in the present account are taken. The lengthy quotations therein made prove that Huntington wrote the English language with great power, and that his mind was singularly devoid of conventional restrictions. All the three works strongly appeal to anyone with an ear for the sweet, sad music of humanity; whilst they also offer very precious material to students of social conditions, and of religious mentality. Huntington was a genius who has never had his due. The clergy of his day envied and hated him for his popularity; and their successors have stifled his fame by a conspiracy of silence. The three works above specified ought certainly to be reprinted in one or another of our popular collections, as they would attract a far wider circle than that of the religiously disposed.

<sup>2</sup> B. p. 363. <sup>3</sup> B. p. 276. <sup>4</sup> B. p. 275.

<sup>5</sup> C. p. 175. <sup>6</sup> C. p. 175-6. <sup>7</sup> A. p. 1-2. <sup>8</sup> A. p. 6.

crust of bread. Then, he entered the service of a clergyman at Frittenden, four or five miles from Cranbrook. Here he got to know a tailor who had an only child, a pretty "black-eyed girl," and, "being of a cheerful disposition," he found pleasure in her company; but without loving her, or paying her any court. After some months, the girl's father, beginning to suspect more than friendship between the two young folks, "gently warned" him to keep away from the house. He took great offence at this polite intimation, and firmly resolved to break off the acquaintance. Within a few days, however, the girl's mother sent for him; but he refused her request. Somewhat later, the mother herself came and told him, that it was not she, but her daughter who desired to see him.

What followed he thus describes:—

I went with the mother to the house, and waited till she got her daughter up; and when she came down stairs, and I saw the reality of her affection, I was much moved. I took her on my knee, and endeavoured to cherish her all that I could; and whilst I was performing the part of a tender nurse, the patient performed the part of a conqueror, and insensibly took me prisoner. Having assuaged the grief, and cheered up the drooping spirits of my patient, I went home, but soon found that I was as effectually entangled in the labyrinth of love as my patient could be; for she had shot me through the heart, and killed me to all but herself. (C. pp. 182-183).

The thought that he might never be able to marry her because of his poverty, and that someone in a better position might take her for her beauty, filled him with dismay, and jealousy, but this latter emotion need not have appeared, as she was no less loving and true than she was beautiful. After a year and a half in this state of "pleasing misery," and "lingering happiness," he got a place with his brother-in-law, who was a gunsmith. Whilst in that situation he used to walk nearly thirty miles to visit his beloved! Alas, he did not long enjoy even that hard-given felicity, for his employer drank heavily, failed in business, and eloped. The girl's parents, seeing her lover poorly clad, and out of work, began to give him the cold shoulder; and even when he was accepted as coacher by a gentleman at Rolvenden in Kent, they let him know that he was not to pay her any more visits; but this prohibition was conveyed in a "genteel" way, because "they found the girl's affections closely fixed." Then we read:—

When the day arrived for me to go to my servitude, I called to see my girl, and I got her to go two or three miles with me. I thought, while on the road, that she would never be a wife of mine, and questioned whether I should ever see her again; and I could not help telling her this. However, she vowed constancy; but I doubted it, as I saw that the countenance of her parents was not towards me as before; and she dropped some hints to confirm it, and declared that she would never comply with their request, in giving her company to another. I had at that time courted her three years and when I took my leave of her, I left her with a heavy heart, and a heavy heart I carried with me: and it was a final leave which I had taken; for I never saw her again from that hour to this. (C. pp. 185-187).

He wrote her, appointing a meeting-place, whither she did not come. Afterwards, he heard that she and her father had set out thither, but had missed the way. He wrote other letters, without getting any reply. He sought to console himself with "three cheerful young women," his fellow-servants; and even tried to court another girl. All these efforts were in vain, for the memory of the lost one perpetually haunted his mind, and he says pathetically, "The more I strove against love, the more it preyed on my spirits; and I laboured under that burden many years."<sup>9</sup> After holding his situation about eleven months, he dreamed that three men known to him, of

whom one was a "high constable," pursued and captured him. He awoke; and again falling into sleep, had the same dream. In great agitation he forsook his bed. It was about four o'clock, and a summer's morn. He opened the house door; and there before him stood the three men of his two dreams. They had come to charge him with being the father of a child born by his girl; and to take him unto the parish officials of Cranbrook. The latter presented him with an order for the child's maintenance. He replied by an offer to marry the girl; but this her father, and the parish officers, flatly refused; and "a counsellor," provided for him by his kind master, advised him to withdraw it. Accepting the position, he paid the amount then demanded; and agreed to pay "a stated sum quarterly." This obligation he "punctually" performed until a severe illness stopped the performance, and thus caused him to leave Cranbrook.

At this point of his narrative he says:

After my departure, I found my love sickness came on me as strongly at times as ever, and I was vexed for consenting to pay the money; because my perpetual afflictions would render it impossible for me ever to do it: and if I could not, I could never return, for fear of a prison; and all hope of that object, as a wife, was cut entirely off. Thus the door behind me was shut; and go wherever I would, I carried nothing but the pressures of hopeless love. Conscience also begun to make strange work within for what I had done, insomuch that at times my sleep departed from me, and I scarcely closed my eyes for whole nights together: and yet at certain intervals, cruel jealousy gathered a desperate balm from the crime itself; for I should never have been able to endure the thought of her dropping, as a pure maiden, into the hands of another, after all these fatigues of baffled love. To be plain, I was glad that I had not allowed that beloved prize to escape out of my hands, to gratify a rival of mine with the honourable "tokens of her virginity." (Deut. xxii. 15-20). . . . However, I kept my vows and promises that I made to her until I heard that she was married to another; and, if I remember right, I heard of her death before I married. (C. 188-189).

After leaving Cranbrook, Huntington made a long itinerary, which he meticulously describes, and which ended at Greenhithe in Kent. During this period he suffered cruel hardships from poverty, and illness; and tried his luck at various employments, whereof he abandoned some from the mere lust of roving. In Greenhithe, a gentleman named Colcraft, who required a kitchen garden, set him to make it. He could not have had a more suitable occupation, but his enjoyment therein was greatly disturbed by apprehensions which he expresses in the following soliloquy:—

I am in danger here—this place is not above twenty-eight miles from the place where that little son and heir of mine lives, that has caused me all this wandering. I am now going to work not far from the main road that leads to the town from whence I came—I shall certainly be seen by somebody, who will gladly report the matter. If I could have paid the quarterly money, I would not have left my native place, which was at that time so dear to me. And, had I but clothes now, fit to be seen in, and money in my pocket, I would most gladly go back to my native place, and discharge the whole affair; but this ague following me perpetually, will render it an impossibility for me ever to appear decently clothed, or able to pay the money. But is there any hope of marrying the woman? No. The father refused—the overseers refused—and the magistrates refused. And, if the father denied me his daughter when I was well dressed, and had a little money, will he consent now, seeing I am in rags?—No; there is no ground of hope there. And suppose the officers were to come after me—I have no money. True; but, according to the

report of some, there is such a thing as lying in jail a whole year. Well, be it so—that confinement would not be much worse than my present liberty. But then consider how you would be dragged about from one Justice of Peace to another, in your present dishabille; and what a figure you would make in all your ragged, tattered condition! True—that indeed would be worse than death itself; there is no ground for hope here; therefore the best step I can take is, to keep out of the way—"No catch me, no have me." And, if ever I get up and prosper in the world, I will carry the money down, and pay it off with honour. But, alas! here is another evil started; and this is I am informed that people advertise the names of persons on such occasions, and promise a reward to the informer; and, if this should be the case, there are enough that would bear tidings for ten shillings if not for ten pence. This, said I, is a weighty point, and ought to be well considered. And, if I change my name, I fear there is danger in it. Here I need both counsel and caution which course to steer, so as to escape all these dangers. My parent's name is Hunt, and the man who is my real father, his name is Russel. But then he has got sons in good circumstances, and they may sue me for assuming his name, though their father never disowned me. If I change my name the law may follow me for that; and, if I let the present name stand, I may by that be traced by the newspapers. There is but one way for me to escape, and that is by *addition*; an addition is no *change*, and addition is no robbery. This is the way that iniquity creeps out of so many human laws. When the thoughts of an addition started up, "Well thought on, said I, it is *in g t o n*, which is to be joined to *H u n t*; which put together, make *Huntington*." And thus matters were settled; without being guilty of an exchange, or of committing a robbery; for the letters of the alphabet are the portion of every man. . . . I suppose my reader is desirous of knowing whether my first-born son be alive or not; to which I answer, "Yes, he is," and if God should enable me, I intend, when I can spare a little money, *to take a present in my hand, and go down and see my son before I die*. He is, I believe, at this time, in the twenty-second year of his age, and lives with a respectable farmer at Tenterden eight miles from Cranbrook in the Weald of Kent: and those who pretend to be skilful in family likenesses say that he is so exact a copy of his father, both in humour and in person, that it is impossible the image of the parent can be extinct while the son liveth. What name he goes by I know not, nor have I had time to inquire, I have had so much to do about my own. (C. pp. 164-196).<sup>10</sup>

With regard to his transgression, Huntington says:—

[It] was blotted out of the book of God's remembrance when the Saviour entered the Holy of Holies, with his own blood; it was blotted out of the book of my conscience almost twelve years ago, by the application of the Saviour's atonement; and the receipt that I have in my study shows that it is blotted out of the books of Frittenden in Kent. (C. pp. 189-190). Of his new name he says:—

With this name I was "born again," and with this name I was "baptized with the Holy Ghost"; and I shall appeal to any man of sense, if a person has not a just right to go by the name that he was born and baptized with. I had no name before my first birth; the name was conferred on me afterwards; but I had the name *Huntington* before I was conceived the *second* time, and was born again with it; and thus "old things are passed away, and behold all things are become new." (C. p. 195).

C. CLAYTON DOVE.

<sup>10</sup> As Huntington says that he was about 17 years old when he met with the girl; that soon afterwards he courted her for three years; that short of a year later he was made to pay for her child; and that this child was 22 years old at the date of the work here quoted, it follows that he himself must have been about 45 years old at the time when he wrote the account.

## Feasts

FROM January 1, to December 31, the Roman Catholic Church, in its early days, provided its people with a series of entertainments, called feasts.

At these feasts religious dramas were performed. And not only at feasts were they played, but at fairs, etc. Hone, in his *Every-day Book*, Col. 1238, gives the following remarkable list of them:—

"In the reign of Queen Anne (1665-1714) the following curious bill relates part of the entertainment at St. Bartholomew's Fair (1701). By her majesty's permission at Healey's booth, over against the Cross Daggers, next to Mr. Miller's booth . . . will be presented a little opera called "The old Creation of the World new Revived." . . . and the following plays:—

- (1) The Creation of Adam and Eve.
- (2) The Intrigues of Lucifer in the Garden of Eden.
- (3) Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.
- (4) Cain going to plow; Abel driving sheep.
- (5) Cain killeth his brother Abel.
- (6) Abraham offereth up his son Isaac.
- (7) The wise men of the East, guided by a star, come and worship Christ.
- (8) Joseph and Mary flee away by night upon an ass.
- (9) King Herod's cruelty his men's spears laden with children.
- (10) Rich Dives invites his friend, and orders the porter to keep beggars from the gate.
- (11) Poor Lazarus comes a begging at Rich Dives' gate; the dogs lick his sores.
- (12) The Good angel and Death contend for Lazarus's life.
- (13) Rich Dives is taken sick, and dieth; he is buried in great solemnity.
- (14) Rich Dives in hell, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom, seen in a most glorious object, all in machines descending in a throne, guarded with multitudes of angels; with the breaking of the clouds, discovering the palace of the sun, in double and treble prospects, to the admiration of all the spectators. Likewise several rich and large figures, which dance jigs, sarabands, between every act; compleated with the merry humours of Sir Jno. Spendall and Punchinello, with several other things never exposed. Performed by Batt. Healey. *Vivat Regina*.

No 14 a veritable transformation scene, surely!

Plays of the above description were popularized by the Church from the fourth century B.C., until the eighteenth century A.D.

On Whitsunday it was customary to dramatize the Descent of the Holy Ghost, as described by Barnaby Googe:—

On whitsunday whyte pigeons tame  
in strings from heaven flie,  
And one that framed is of wood  
still hangeth in the skie,  
Thou seest how they with idols play  
and teach the people too;  
None otherwise than little gyrls  
with puppets vse to do.

Lambardi tells us how, when a child, "he saw a puppet in St. Paul's Cathedral at the feast of Whitsuntide; where the descent of the Holy Ghost was performed by a white pigeon being let fly out of a hole in the midst of the roof of the great aisle, with a long censer . . . and was swung up and down, breathing out over the whole church, and the assembled multitude, a most pleasant perfume."

It must have been an expensive trick this swinging of the Holy Ghost, judging from an old *Computus* (Anno 1509), of St. Patrick's, Dublin:—

"We have 4s. 7d. paid to those playing with the

great and little angel and the dragon; 3s. paid for little cords employed about the Holy Ghost; 4s. 6d. for making the angel (thurificantis) censing, and 2s. 2d. for cords of it—all on the feast of Pentecost." Fourteen shillings and three pence was a large sum of money in those days.

After Whitsunday came Trinity Sunday. It was constituted a feast of the Trinity for the whole Church by Pope John XXII in 1334.

The festival of Corpus Christi, held on the Thursday after Trinity Sunday; first celebrated at Liège in A.D. 1241 by the Canons of St. Martin; recommended in a Bull issued by Pope Urban IV. between 1262-1264, and confirmed and enjoined by the Council of Vienne in 1311-1312; was a grand festival in celebration of the doctrine of transubstantiation.

It was customary both at home and abroad to perform plays on this day, but generally Mystery Plays.

The mystery play dates from about the second century, the first one being written by one Ezekiel, a Jew. His subject was a Biblical one—taken from the Book of Exodus. Moses delivered the prologue in a lengthy speech, and his rod was turned into a serpent on the stage.

Nearly a century and a half elapsed before he was followed by the Apollinarii, and Gregory Nazianzen (328-389), who wrote comedies and tragedies on religious subjects.

Spiritual comedies were known in Padua, and were played, in 1243.

We learn how Philip IV., The Fair, King of France, entertained our Edward II. and his Queen, with "The Torments of the Damned," etc., in 1313; of a Passion Play performed in 1439 that the scenery depicting the mouth of hell was so well designed to allow of the devils going easily in or coming out, and that they had large steel eyes; and from Fitzstephen, writing in 1174, that London, for its theatrical exhibitions has religious plays, either the representations of miracles wrought by holy confessors, or the sufferings of martyrs; and that Chester (1328) and Coventry (1416) were famed for mystery plays.

The most distinguished of mystery players were the "Society of Parish Clerks." In July, 1390, they played before Richard II. and his Queen. In 1490 they played the "Creation of the World," to audiences of the nobility and gentry from all parts of England. God, at one of these performances (represented by a little, fat, old person with a prominent nose, and very distinguished grey whiskers) before making Eve, was holding up to public view a rib, when it was snatched by a dog in the audience, leaving Eve no option but to appear, ready made, from her hiding place behind Adam.

York, for its representations of Corpus Christi plays was famed until 1584.

At Newcastle-upon-Tyne the incorporated trades were distinguished actors from 1426—coopers, barbers, slaters, millers, house-carpenters and masons.

At Alnwick, in 1512, the children of the Earl of Northumberland's Chapel performed mysteries for twelve days at Christmas.

Thus far we heard a good deal of what the people did, and how and why they did it, but not a word of where they did it.

According to Strutt: "When mysteries were the only plays, the stage consisted of three platforms, one above another. On the uppermost sat God the Father, surrounded by his angels; on the second the glorified saints, and on the last and lowest men who had not yet passed from this life. On one side of the lowest platform was the resemblance of a dark pitchy cavern, from whence issued the appearance of fire and flames; and when it was necessary, the audience was

treated with hideous yellings and noises in imitation of the howlings and cries of the wretched souls tormented by relentless demons. From the yawning cave the devils themselves constantly ascended to delight, and to instruct the spectators."

To conclude briefly with one interesting celebration where an animal plays a major part:—

"In the middle ages, animals formed as prominent a part in the worship of the time as they had done in the old religion of Egypt. The cat was a very important personage in religious festivities. At Aix, in Provence, on the festival of *Corpus Christi*, the finest tom cat of the country, wrapt in swaddling clothes like a child, was exhibited in a magnificent shrine to public admiration. Every knee was bent, every hand strewed flowers or poured incense, and Grimalkin was treated in all respects as the god of the day. But on the festival of St. John, poor Tom's fate was reversed. A number of the tabby tribe were put into a wicker basket and thrown alive into the midst of an immense fire, kindled in the public square by the bishop and his clergy. Hymns and anthems were sung, and processions were made by the priests and people in honour of the sacrifice." (Mills' *Hist. Crusades*).

Lest the spectators should be moved by "that final Miaow—that weird unearthly din"—to pity the poor animals, butchered to make a religious festival, the Bishop and his clergy considered it necessary to howl like the demons they were. That each of them contracted clergyman's sore throat by doing so was a consummation devoutly to be wished.

GEORGE WALLACE.

## Peter Annet—1693-1769

### AN APPRECIATION

PETER ANNET was born in Liverpool in 1693—a year before the birth of Voltaire. Although these two great Deists lived in different countries, and under different conditions, there is a remarkable resemblance between them for classical knowledge, originality of thought and view-points, and, especially, for the brilliant wit and humour that flow, like sparkling sunlit streams, through the fair fields of their works.

Peter Annet was trained for the Dissenting Ministry but, on becoming a Deist, he took the post of schoolmaster in his native town; he invented and published a new system of shorthand, which ran through three editions.<sup>1</sup> Wheeler (B.D.F.) states "Priestley learnt it at school and corresponded with Annet."

Among other activities Annet did an amount of public speaking, and his earliest pamphlet, published in 1739, is entitled: *Judging for Ourselves, or Freethinking the Great Duty of Religion, displayed in Two Lectures delivered at Plasterer's Hall, by P.A., Minister of the Gospel*, in which, as Mr. Joseph McCabe, in his *Dictionary of Modern Rationalists*, remarks, "he boldly attacked Christianity. This was followed by others, and he lost his position. He came to London, and was for years one of the most outspoken spirits of the Robin Hood Society." This celebrated Society took its name from the "Robin Hood and Little John Inn," in Butcher's Row, Essex Street, Strand, where its debates were held. William Howitt writes:<sup>2</sup> "The payment of Sixpence formed the only requisite

for admission, three halfpence of which were said to be put by for the purpose of charity. The annual number of visitors averaged about 5,000. A gilt chair indicated the presiding authority, and all questions, not excepting religion and politics, were open to discussion."

Annet's next work: *The History of Joseph Considered by Menciaus Philalethes*, written against Samuel Chandler's *Defence of the Prime Ministry and Character of Joseph*, was published in 1744, and is a masterly unmasking of the character of that crafty Bible "hero."

In 1744 Annet also published: *The Conception of Jesus as the Foundation of the Christian Religion Considered*, "in which," states Wheeler, "he boldly attacks the doctrine of the Incarnation as 'a legend of the Romanists.'" I have not seen this work, but of that which closely followed it, also in 1744, and ran through three editions during that year, I possess a copy. It is, *The Resurrection of Jesus Considered in Answer to the Tryal of the Witnesses* (Third Edition, with great amendments, 1744). This work was written to expose the fallacies in Bishop Sherlock's *Tryal of the Witnesses*, and is a wonderfully well-written achievement. This was followed by *The Resurrection Reconsidered*, 1744, and *The Sequel of the Resurrection of Jesus Considered*, and, lastly on this subject: *The Resurrection Defenders Stript of All Defence*; both these last-named appearing in 1745. All these original editions, as also Annet's later works, I am proud to possess, and owe a deep debt of gratitude to Mr. Ambrose G. Barker—who has got together the largest collection of Paine literature in this country—for the gift of them.

Peter Annet was the Forerunner of Paine. I claim with confidence this pioneer position for him. Unassailable proof of this is presented in his works. Unfortunately these have not been re-printed for over a hundred years, and his very name has in consequence become almost unknown among the "rank and file" in the modern Freethought Movement. We need to revive interest in the lives and aggressive activities, the struggles and sufferings, of all those who wrote and worked for Freedom of Thought, Speech and Publication in the past.

In his *Short History of Freethought*, J. M. Robertson pays Annet tribute due for being "practically the first who sought to reach the multitude; and his punishment expressed the special resentment aroused in the governing classes by such a policy." Another acknowledged authority, the late Professor J. B. Bury, in *A History of Freedom of Thought*, while writing of Paine, connects him with Annet. He states:—

It was doubtless in consequence of the enormous circulation of the *Age of Reason*, that a Society for the Suppression of Vice decided to prosecute the publisher. Unbelief was common among the ruling class, but the view was firmly held that religion was necessary for the populace, and that any attempt to disseminate unbelief among the lower classes must be suppressed. Religion was regarded as a valuable instrument to keep the poor in order. It is notable that of the earlier Rationalists (apart from the case of Woolston) the only one<sup>3</sup> who was punished was Peter Annet, a schoolmaster, who tried to popularize Freethought and was sentenced, for diffusing "diabolical" opinions, to the pillory and hard labour (1763). Paine held that the people at large had the right of access to all new ideas, and he wrote so as to reach the people. Hence his book must be suppressed. At the trial (1797) the judge placed every obstacle in the way of defence. The publisher was

<sup>1</sup> The Second Edition: *Annet's Short-Hand Perfected* (N.D.) is prefaced with verse-tributes by J. Elderton, W. Kenrick, D. Roberts, and J. Priestley.

<sup>2</sup> *Homes and Haunts of the Most Eminent British Poets*, 1863 (p. 220.)

<sup>3</sup> This is not exactly correct because there was the case of Ilive, which he omits to mention, referred to further on. See also my Article on Woolston in the *Freethinker* of August 1, 1937.

sentenced to a year's imprisonment. This was not the end of Paine prosecutions. In 1811 a Third Part of the *Age of Reason* appeared, and Eaton, the publisher, was condemned to eighteen months' imprisonment, and to stand in the pillory once a month. The judge, Lord Ellenborough, said in his charge, that "to deny the truths of the book which is the foundation of our faith has never been permitted."

If his publishers suffered in England, the author himself suffered in America, where bigotry did all it could to make the last years of his life bitter.

This lengthy quotation is of such *intense vital interest and importance* that I make no apology for introducing it here; I have, however, rather anticipated events, and must return to the Seventeen-Forties.

Annet having concluded his series of pamphlets on the *Resurrection*, in his next treatise: *An Examination of the History and Character of St. Paul*—written in answer to Lord Lyttleton's *Observations on the Conversion and Apostleship of St. Paul, 1747*—"he attacks the sincerity of the apostle to the Gentiles," writes Wheeler, "and even questions the authenticity of his Epistles. In *Supernaturals Examined, 1747*, he argues that all miracles are incredible."

In 1749, Peter Annet, inspired by his own domestic situation, published *Social Bliss Considered*, an argument in favour of liberty of Divorce. He had, as he allegorically explains, experienced Heaven with his first wife, and, after her death, Hell with his second, from whom he separated, but to whom he was still legally fettered, and by whom he was abused, traduced, and handicapped in his career. He states:—

The following feeling arguments flow from one that has had a two-fold Experience in matrimonial Bonds of Bliss and Misery, Love and Envy, Honour and Contempt in States as contrary as Light and Darkness, and as wide as Heaven and Hell, that have been like the Years of Plenty and Famine in Egypt; so that the former Plenty was forgotten by the following Famines, or like the rich Man in Torment with a Retrospection of past Felicity, never more to return; the once joyous Days of Affection and Felicity, eclipsed by a sullen Constellation of malignant Influence, bringing Confusion within Doors and without. Let Silence conceal the rest. *Tell it not in Gath, publish it not in Askelon, Lest the Daughters of Rebellion rejoice and the Daughters of Wantonness and Ingratitude triumph.*

At any rate, whatever his domestic experiences, they were not allowed to embitter or blight his lovable character; the bright sunshine of his natural temperament and the optimistic outlook on life broke through all clouds, though trials and troubles were his lot, and storms and tempestuous opposition and persecution assailed him. He wielded a powerful pen and had a keen sense of humour—it sparkles brilliantly, as stars on a cloudless night, through all his writings. His style is conversational, clear, and convincing. Personally I have more than once sat up reading his works "all through the night," because the enjoyment and exhilaration made the hours slip by unnoticed until dawn.

*Social Bliss* is a brilliantly written brochure, extremely bold and characteristically daringly challenging in its ethics and expression. Even in our times "Geoffrey Mortimer" has not equalled in audacity the "Polly Baker Anecdotes," whether authentic or invented by the author. We must remember Peter Annet possessed a strongly-developed sense of humour, and wit as spontaneous and as scintillating as Lucian's and Voltaire's. By the way, in his *Philosophical Dictionary*, Voltaire refers to Annet as author of an anonymous book, now considered, but on doubtful grounds, not to have been written by him.

ELIA TWYNAM.

(To be continued)

## Correspondence

### COCK-FIGHTING

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

SIR,—Mr. George Wallace's account of cock-fighting is very interesting, but he makes no mention of the present popularity of the sport, which flourishes in many parts of England. Lancashire is, I believe, its headquarters, but it is carried on, *sub rosa*, even in remote Cornwall, and its supporters arrange mains in most countries.

Many wealthy men breed game-birds from celebrated strains for fighting, but this and the possession of appliances for cocking will, I am informed, become illegal if Sir Robert Gower's Bill becomes law. The steel spurs used in cock-fighting are delicate but deadly weapons, about an inch and a half long and as sharp as a needle.

Apologists assert that their use is more humane than permitting the birds to fight with their natural weapons, which wound without killing, whereas one stroke of the steel substitute frequently causes instant death.

The essential operation of dubbing, which is cutting off the comb of a fighting bird in order that it may not afford a hold for its adversary, is illegal.

It is difficult to understand how people can derive pleasure from cocking, but I know men, otherwise humane and fond of animals and birds, whose chief pleasure it is.

In a recent account of a successful action by Our Dumb Friend's League, against certain cockers, a secret dossier was mentioned which contained "The names of a canon of the Church of England and several peers." We know the hunting and shooting parsons, and now learn that they have a cock-fighting "brother in Christ."

EDGAR SYERS.

## Obituary

### HENRY JAMES SAVORY

WE regret to have to announce the death of Councillor H. J. Savory, who was cremated at Golders Green on Monday, August 9. Mr. George Bedborough conducted the service, and there was a large gathering of personal friends, including a large number from the Railway Company with which Mr. Savory was connected, and a number of members of the West London Branch of the National Secular Society.

Mr. Savory was 77 years of age, and came to London in 1878. He has been a most useful member of the N.S.S. He took part in numerous Conferences of the Society, and will be greatly missed by all who knew him. His experience of public affairs made him of value in a direction that was of great use to the West London Branch.

A lengthy notice of his death, and an account of his public services appears in the *Willesden Chronicle* of August 5.

## SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

### LONDON

#### OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand): 6.30, Miss E. Millard.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): Mr. L. Ebury.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park): 7.0, Sunday, A Lecture. Rushcroft Road, Brixton, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. F. A. Ridley. Cock Pond, Clapham Old Town, 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. Barker.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Miss E. Millard, M.A., Messrs. E. Bryant and C. Barnes. 6.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Tuson. Wednesday, 7.30, Mr. W. B. Collins. Thursday, 7.30, Mrs. N. Buxton. Friday, 7.30, Mr. G. Barnes.

(Continued on page 527)

## PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE

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