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Views and Opinions

Mr. Noyes and the Church

We lacked space last week to give more than a passing notice to the case of Mr. Alfred Noyes and the Roman Church; but so much has been written about it in the press that a longer notice is called for. Mr. Noyes is one of that band of writers who have devoted themselves to the task of commending the Roman Catholic Church to the world, and if truth must be told, is far more convinced of his own ability to do so than his writings would indicate. Those who have read his book, published some time ago (*The Unknown God*, 1934), will recall that mass of half-digested philosophy and strained science, in which the writer wraps himself in clouds of words, and so hardly ever comes within sight of that which he ought to be able to see quite clearly. That book does not seem to have excited any resentment on the part of the Church, although his citations from Huxley and Darwin, with the meaning he attaches to them are enough to make both turn in their graves, were such a feat possible. Now he has gone a step further by writing a life of Voltaire. This did not demand so much careful thinking, and Mr. Noyes comes through the ordeal with more honour. He wrote this "life," he tells us to convince "the sceptical non-Catholic world that the solution of its present difficulties and bewilderment is to be found in the Catholic faith and there alone." His fitness for the task of instructing present day Freethinkers is indicated by the fact that he imagines he is enlightening Atheists by telling them that Darwin said his understanding revolted against things occurring by "pure chance," but in the true line of the Bellocian and Chestertonian tradition does not inform his readers that Darwin explained that by "chance" he meant occurring through some unknown causes. That would have blown his interpretation sky-high. The life of Voltaire, he says, was also written to bring home to modern "Agnostics and so-called Atheists," the fact that the admissions made by Voltaire entirely

shattered "the Atheistic contentions of his followers." It may come as news to Mr. Noyes that Atheists have never at any time followed Voltaire in his belief in deity, and it should be quite obvious to one who writes of himself as an English man of letters of standing, that if Agnostics had followed Voltaire in his arguments for deity they would not have called themselves Agnostics. I merely mention these things in order to show Mr. Noyes' qualifications for lecturing Atheists and Agnostics, and to assure him that one does not become an Atheist as a man becomes a member of the Roman Church—by a mere act of illogical faith.

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Rome at Work

Mr. Noyes, however, did more than exhibit to Freethinkers, he also exhibited him to Roman Catholics. He actually praised Voltaire. He also dissipated some of the lies told about Voltaire by Catholic writers. And that so far as one can see (I do not know exactly what are the offensive passages in the work), is to the Church the unforgivable sin. For the Roman Church—or the Protestant Churches—never withdraws a lie told against non-Christians, or apologizes for having told it. To do so might weaken the faith of believers in the Church, and make it less easy to get the next lie accepted. And a Christian Church without lies has never yet appeared in history. At any rate, Mr. Noyes has been called to book for what is regarded as an attempt to whitewash Voltaire. A letter was sent from Rome to Cardinal Hinsley ordering:—

(a) That the author be informed that the book be found worthy of condemnation by the Holy Office, but such could be avoided if he removes, as far as he is able, all copies from circulation and at the same time writes something that will be equivalent to a reparation.

(b) That the publishers be severely warned for having published the book, and that they withdraw it from sale.

The Sacred Congregation (the letter added) charges your Eminence to communicate the above decisions to the parties interested and afterwards inform the Congregation of the Holy Office of the result of such communication.

That represents the Roman Catholic Church in action where its teeth are drawn, or at least where the cutting edges are filed down. In favourable circumstances the Church would have arrested writer and publisher, and dealt with them as provided by the law and practice of the "Holy Inquisition." In the circumstances all that Cardinal Hinsley, the chief representative of Rome in this country—and who apparently takes his orders in both religion and politics from Rome—in a letter to the *Times* of August 11, expresses his regret at the publicity given to the matter, and meets the situation with the usual Roman Catholic defence, a lie. He says:—

With the official correspondence before me I am in a position to say that there has been no condemnation. There is a question only of some amendments the nature of which will be discussed later by the author and myself.

The Cardinal denies that there has been any "condemnation" of the book, there has been only a ruling that the book as it stands is "worthy of condemnation." Was there ever a more transparent falsehood uttered, even in the history of Roman Catholic apologetics? The author is advised that certain parts of the book must be amended, the publisher is ordered to withdraw it from publication, the author is also ordered to write "something in reparation," but, says Cardinal Hinsley, there has been no condemnation! What does the action of the Church mean other than that the letter from the "Holy Office" is but a preliminary to the book being placed on the Index? If the author is so lacking in self-respect as to obey the Church, then the bowdlerized and falsified book may be read by the faithful, and the publisher will be allowed to continue his business—under the control of Cardinal Hinsley. If these conditions are not complied with the book will be formally condemned. Even the *Church Times*, with all its Catholic predilections, thinks that Cardinal Hinsley's letter is too much, and says it is "playing with words" to say that "worthy of condemnation" does not mean a condemnation of the book. "Playing with words," is in itself a playing with words when dealing with Cardinal Hinsley and his disclaimer. The Cardinal's ability deliberately to disseminate falsehood—again acting under orders, one assumes—was shown clearly enough in his conduct with regard to the "Godless Conference." But here is further evidence. With the facts before him, and with every opportunity to acquire any information he desired, the Cardinal has been one of the chief agents in circulating the lies that the Conference was ordered by Moscow, paid for by Moscow, and the English Societies that are acting are merely pawns in the hands of Moscow. Naturally this pawn in the hands of Rome is always ready to find in others the same mean motives that operate in himself.

* * *

The Rule of the Church

As we said last week, Mr. Noyes' tearful protest in the *Times* leaves us cold. The *Tablet* properly remarks that:—

All Catholics understand that they live necessarily under obedience, and every Catholic writer is prepared to be told by competent authority that what is written is contrary to Catholic teaching, and when so told, to withdraw or to correct what is offensive.

Exactly! Mr. Noyes entered the Catholic Church with his eyes open, and if he did not know this rule of the Roman Church, then he is unfit to write on anything. The remedy lies in his own hands, and there is no need for him to be a mere puppet with no independent opinions of his own, and with honest men always in doubt as to whether he really believes what he says. The remedy is not that of protesting in the press that he is a faithful son of the Church, and has no intention of writing anything contrary to the Church, but to tell the Church to go to the place it has advertised for centuries, and to vindicate his own manhood by an act of independence.

But as a Freethinker I feel somewhat indebted to Mr. Noyes for having so clearly raised one or two important issues. In the first place, there is the significant and true statement of the *Tablet* that every Catholic writer is prepared to be told that what he has written is contrary to Catholic teaching, and when so told to withdraw or modify according to instructions. Mark, the teaching is condemned, not because it is

untrue, but because it is contrary to Church doctrine; that is, everything a Catholic writes must be in agreement with Church teaching. No one can be certain that what a Catholic writes is what he believes to be the truth, still less that it is the truth. All that one can be certain about it is that the Church generally agrees with it. It is not the truth, it is merely Catholic, Christian truth. That helps one to understand a deal of the writing of the late G. K. Chesterton, of Hilaire Belloc, and of other Catholic writers. They are told by the Church what they must believe, they are told by the Church what they may write. If they write otherwise their writings will be condemned, Catholics will be forbidden to read them, and the publisher who issues them will have, so far as the Church can control it, his business ruined. Circumstances do not admit of his being imprisoned and punished, but the Church does what it can towards doing what it would. The history the Church permits is that which falls into line with Catholic teaching, the science it permits is that which does not contradict Catholic teaching, the sociology it permits must agree with Catholic teaching. In each case when the Church permits otherwise, it is only when circumstances force a greater liberality. And if the Church had kept the power it once had it would use the prison, the rack, and the stake as it once did. A Church that will condemn a man in the next world for not obeying its orders in this, is giving evidence that its toleration of differences is compulsory. I said last week that Christianity was Fascism applied to the field of religion, and that Fascism was Christianity applied to the field of politics. The case of Mr. Noyes and the falsehood of Cardinal Hinsley are helpful illustrations.

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Man and His Past

Next, it is worthy of note that the action of the Roman Church with regard to Mr. Noyes, while an illustration of that policy of repression and coercion and misrepresentation that has always characterized it, also represents the policy of the whole of the Christian Church, when due allowance is made for changed circumstances. There is not a writing-man in this country who does not know that certain publishing houses will not publish books attacking religious beliefs in an uncompromising manner. And I am quite sure that there are comparatively few prominent booksellers who would dare to display works of the kind referred to, not always because they are threatened by this or that Church, but because of the number of protests from individuals, and loss of trade, if they do so. For many years the distributing houses in this country refused to handle this journal, and even now that obstacle is overcome, newsagents who display it are frequently threatened with a boycott if they continue to do so. And although, as I have frequently pointed out, the open threat of the Roman Church is probably less demoralizing personally than the overt intolerance of the non-Catholic Christian bodies, the same principle operates with both. Nor need we confine this charge to Christian bodies. It is true of religious bodies as a whole. Even the Mohammedans in this country, only the other day, staged a public demonstration demanding that Mr. H. G. Wells withdraws from one of his books comments made on the character of Mohammed. Intolerance is not a peculiarity of religion, but add to intolerance the belief that the dominating consideration is the salvation of man's soul in the next world, and that the way of escape rests in the hands of this or that Church, add to that also possession of the power to control, and we have the worst feelings of man moralized, and the vilest actions given religious justification.

A Slight Case of Malice

"Master who crowned our immelodious days
With flowers of perfect speech."—*Watson.*

"True to the truth whose star leads heroes home."
Swinburne.

WHAT a thing it is to have a bad name! Call a man an Atheist, or an Anarchist, and the Orthodox people see to the rest. Because Shelley was an Atheist, his name was a hiss and a byword, not only during his short lifetime, but for decades afterwards. Swinburne was also an Atheist, and he suffered the same fate. Accused of obscenity and drunkenness whilst he lived, his poetry had been belittled and lampooned since his death. Not long since, Mr. Humbert Wolfe said, pontifically, that Swinburne's verse was not poetry. More recently, Mr. Harold Nicholson accused the great Victorian poet of lacking imagination, and of repeating the same ideas, again and again.

The history of literature is full of these limitations of taste. When Browning lent Keats's poems to Mrs. Carlyle, she remarked that "almost any young gentleman with a sweet tooth might be expected to write such things." Mrs. Carlyle was a clever woman, but she had her uncritical moments. Modern writers have their little likes and dislikes. I have seen the latest freak of futurism preferred to Swinburne's elegy on Baudelaire, and Tennyson's *Lotus Eaters* rejected as unreadable verbiage.

It is as well for the light-hearted detractors of a very great poet that he is no longer with us. For, although Swinburne dwelt upon Olympus, he could, upon occasion, hurl thunderbolts. Shelley has told us that great poets are tried by a jury of their peers. Hear what George Meredith says of Swinburne:—

Song was his natural voice. He was the greatest of our lyrical poets—of the world's I should say, considering what a language he had to wield.

What a tribute! The great writers never pass one another without a royal salute. Any insect can sting a lion, but the insect remains an insect, and the lion is still a lion.

Swinburne was a great poet. In a thousand years of English literature there has been no such metrical inventor in our language. He enlarged and extended the frontiers of poetry, although men of rare and unmistakable genius had ransacked verse for centuries before he was born. Compared with Swinburne, Keats and Coleridge are poor of resource limited in range, timid in execution. That is not to say that Swinburne has excelled them in ideas or melody, only that he was a master in the use of a far wider choice of instruments.

Swinburne was a lord of language. He can charm you with a lyric, such as *The Ballad of Dreamland*; and he can thrill and inspire with the great war-song in *Erechtheus*, where the turmoil of battle is rendered in unforgettable language. Above all other English poets he is the singer of the sea. His love of ocean is not merely sensuous. That delight he has rendered wonderfully in his *Tristram*, but his finest sea-pieces are born of imaginative sympathy and insight. None has so vividly rendered the magic of the dawn breaking over the deep, or the terrors of the trumpets of the night, and the lightnings of the storm. Amongst the cruellest features of the cosmos he exults; he drinks the ether of space as men drink wine. These are but a part of his accomplishments. He was a rare critic and an accomplished scholar. Observe his masterly essays on Shakespeare and the Elizabethans, and his really beautiful renderings of Victor Hugo, Baudelaire, and Villon. Swinburne could also write a lovely

North-Country song with the perfume of the heather clinging to it, and he could lower his high cadences to the ears of little children without loss for a moment of the omnipotent beauty of his incomparable style.

From his early manhood until his seventieth year he was an acknowledged force, not only in English, but, what is far rarer, in European literature. Men came to think of him—with Keats, with Shelley, with Wordsworth—as one of the singers who mark an era. For two whole generations he upheld that splendid tradition of liberty, and gave us poems, plays, criticisms which breathed into our literature new harmonies and a revolutionary fervour. It is the simple truth to say that, had not Swinburne lived, the world would have been largely ignorant of the flexibility and potentialities of the English language.

Beside being damned with faint praise, Swinburne has been accused of twisting the vine leaves in his hair. Orthodox critics must have been angry to have written in this silly strain. Swinburne lived to more than three score years and ten, so his habits, whatever they were, did not shorten his life to any serious extent. I am not wholly certain that the great poet might have produced more and better work had it not been for alcohol. On tea, he could scarcely have bettered the superb choruses of *Atalanta in Calydon*; on lemonade, he could hardly have chanted the praises of Dolores or Faustine more musically; on gingerade, the *Songs Before Sunrise* could hardly have been more sonorous. However ascetic, or temperate, or evenly-balanced Swinburne might have been, he could have done no more than write his name forever beside Tennyson and Shelley, and the glorious company of England's foremost poets. Such as he was, Swinburne gave us what we keep of him. It is a very open question whether another kind of Swinburne would have given us the like manifestation of genius.

Recall this great poet's enthusiasm for right causes. The warmth of his praise is an endless delight. Such tributes as he has paid to the great apostles and champions of Freedom have a generosity and enthusiasm unequalled even in poetry. How he has sung the praises of Cromwell and Milton, of Shelley and Landor, of Whitman and Victor Hugo is well known. More enduring than the white marble of the Genoese monument are those lovely lyrics of which Mazzini and the cause to which he dedicated his life were the inspiration. The love of Liberty has been a common possession of our greatest poets, and hardly one of them has failed to give splendid expression to the feeling. But Swinburne has surpassed them all in the ardour of his devotion, and in the rapture of his praise:—

"The very thought in us how much we love thee
Makes the throat sob with love, and blinds the eyes."

It comes to this in the end. The greatest poet of the last generation was an avowed Freethinker and unabashed Republican. In courageous utterance against Priestcraft, Swinburne was as outspoken as Shelley. In *Atalanta in Calydon* he denounced "the supreme evil, god," and in subsequent utterances he used all the artillery of a great poet's antagonism against the Christian Superstition. No poet since Shelley sings more loftily, or with more fiery passion, or with freer thought, than Swinburne when he is arraignment Priestcraft at the bar of Humanity:—

"We have done with the kisses that sting,
The thief's mouth red from the feast,
The blood on the hands of the King,
And the lie at the lips of the priest."

Swinburne fluttered the dovescotes of Orthodoxy with his *Poems and Ballads*, although some of the poems had appeared in the scholastic *Spectator*, and the austere John Ruskin had given the book his bless-

ing: "In power and imagination and understanding," Ruskin said, "he simply sweeps me away before him, as a torrent does a pebble." Indeed, the volume created as much excitement as Byron's *Don Juan* had to an earlier generation. Some critics complained loudly that the book was unfit for young women. "I do not write for schoolgirls," replied Swinburne, "I leave that to my opponents." The poet's vogue became extraordinary. Scott-Holland has told us that Young University men shouted the poems, chanted them, and he quotes:—

"Dream that the lips once breathless
Can quicken if they would;
Say that the soul is deathless;
Dream that the gods are good.
Say March may wed September,
And time divorce regret;
But not that you remember,
And not that I forget."

But for his outspoken views on Priestcraft and Monarchy, Swinburne must inevitably have succeeded Tennyson as Poet-Laureate. He was the last of the great poets who dominated the imagination of lovers of poetry.

All the really great poets of the nineteenth century were heterodox. Wordsworth, in his period of highest inspiration, was a pantheist; and the greatest of them all, Shelley, was a declared Atheist. Byron was a thorough sceptic; Keats as Pagan as old-world Horace; and Edward Fitzgerald as epicurean as Omar Khayyam. Tennyson was heterodox, and Matthew Arnold a kid-glove Secularist. James Thomson was a militant Freethinker, and George Meredith and William Morris were both sceptics. Thomas Hardy and William Watson were outspoken Freethinkers. Shelley, who sang at the opening of the nineteenth century, and Swinburne, who chanted at its close, were both frankly, even triumphantly, Atheistic. Listen to the later poet:—

"Because man's soul is man's god still,
What wind soever waft his will
Save his own soul's light overhead,
None leads him, and none ever led."

The wheel had come full circle. Christianity was tottering to its fall. It no longer attracted men of genius, and therein lay the secret of its decline. The genius of modern times is not enkindled at the broken altar of a decaying creed, but at the altar of Humanity, which was standing before any other was built, and will endure when every other has crumbled into dust.

MIMNERMUS.

1881 and 1938

In the year 1881, the Congress of the International Federation of Freethinkers met in London. Christians were no more tolerant in 1881 than they are in 1938. But it did not then occur to any of the Christian sects that Freethinkers from other lands were specially vile because they were foreigners.

The President of the 1881 Congress was Dr. Ludwig Büchner, whose *Force and Matter*—"constantly vilified and constantly misrepresented," says J. M. Robertson)—had for over a quarter of a century triumphed as the best statement of his day of the scientific position in regard to the claims of religion. Büchner had never met Charles Darwin, whose work he was instrumental in introducing to the German public, by translation and explanation. He had corresponded with Darwin, and now when this Congress had brought him to England, he was delighted to receive an invitation to visit the great biologist. Büchner's *Die Darwinische Theorie* is still read to-day

wherever German literature is permitted to be read.

On the day after the Conference ended, Dr. Büchner set out for a visit to the little Kentish village of Down, where he spent a memorable day. Amongst those present besides Darwin and his guest from Germany were Dr. F. B. Aveling, an unnamed clergyman, Mrs. Darwin, Francis Darwin—son and co-worker with Charles Darwin—and Darwin's grandchildren. The presence of the local vicar may have added zest to the various discussions. It was September 28, 1881, only a few months before the death of Darwin, a fact which gives these discussions the interest one feels in reading perhaps the ripest opinions of a great thinker. The talks are admirably summarized in a long out-of-print pamphlet entitled: *The Religious Views of Charles Darwin* (published by the Freethought Publishing Company).

As the visit was intended to be purely social, Dr. Büchner did not initiate any religious discussions. It was Darwin who began by expressing great interest in Büchner's *Geistesleben der Thiere* (The Spirit Life of Animals), which had been translated by Mrs. Besant.

Much misunderstanding has arisen because Charles Darwin never called himself an Atheist. In the discussions at Down House in 1881, Darwin suddenly asked Büchner: "Why do you call yourselves Atheists?" It is impossible here to detail the conversation which followed, but the case for Atheism was presented by two of the best exponents of Atheism of that date. It may well be that a slightly different presentation of the case would have brought from Darwin greater receptivity—his objection in any case was a purely verbal one. As the talk continued, it became evident that Darwin fully endorsed the Materialist position, adding finally: "I am with you in thought, but I should prefer the word Agnostic to the word Atheist."

Another statement made by Darwin on this historical occasion proved that he had ceased to believe in Christianity since he was forty years old, which means that he had been a Freethinker for the last thirty-two years. In his *Autobiography* Darwin confesses (boasts?) that he ceased to believe in a personal God since the publication of *Origin and Species*. When he published *Descent of Man*, in 1871, his unbelief was obvious and undeniable. As Chapman Cohen says (in *God and Evolution*) "The effect of the *Origin of Species* was to explode a whole system of religion . . . Darwinism was 'anti-Christian,' 'Atheistic,'" as Christians were quick to testify.

In *Life and Letters* (Vol. I., p. 317) Francis Darwin appears to dispute Dr. Aveling's report already mentioned. He does not dispute the verbal accuracy of the report, but disagrees with Dr. Aveling's conclusions. G. W. Foote (in a valuable and readable booklet *Darwin on God*) regards Francis Darwin's comment as "amusing, but not convincing; indeed it gives up the whole point at issue." And Foote concludes thus:—

This at least is certain, that Charles Darwin the supreme biologist of his age and the greatest scientific intellect since Newton, was an ATHEIST in the only proper sense of the word, the sense supported by etymology, the sense accepted by those who bear the name.

Perhaps some of those who attend the 1938 Conference may find time to visit Down (four miles from Orpington—easily reached by train or bus) eighteen miles from London. They will not meet Darwin in person, but they may enter his house and see the rooms where he worked, and enter the garden he loved and which taught him so much of what he taught the world.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

The Destruction of the Monasteries

THE overthrow of Papal authority in England, and the subjection of the Anglican Church to secular control having been accomplished, the Reformation Parliament undertook the task of dissolving the religious houses. In its seventh and last session (1535-6), Parliament conducted the "second grand innovation in the ecclesiastical polity of England."

All monastic institutions under the annual value of £200 (a sum that must be multiplied more than twelve-fold to bring it into accordance with the present purchasing power of money), numbering 376, were suppressed, and all their land and personal property made over to the King, his heirs and assigns "to do and use therewith his or their own wills to the pleasure of Almighty God and the honour and profit of the Realm." (27 Henry VIII., c. 28).

Cardinal Wolsey's successor, Thomas Cromwell, in his capacity as chief minister of the Crown, nominated Commissioners to conduct a general inspection of the monasteries. Their report, which has been fiercely controverted, pro and con, by modern historians, was probably prejudiced, although its substantial accuracy seems certain. In any case, the enormities the report professed to disclose became the basis of the ensuing legislation, and the preamble of the measure passed into law recites that: "Manifest sins, vicious, carnal and abominable luxury, is daily used and committed in such little and small abbeys, priories and other religious houses of monks, canons and nuns. Amendment has long been tried, but their vicious living shamelessly increaseth and augmenteth."

Stress was laid on the sins of the smaller houses, and to secure the assent of the Abbots of the larger monasteries, the King assured them that in these retreats "religion was right well kept." Even the Commissioners praised the orderly character of some of the greater foundations. Still, Hallam's judgment was that in the light of the fact that most religious houses were "exempted from episcopal visitation, and entrusted with the care of their own discipline, such abuses had practically prevailed and gained strength by connivance, as we may naturally expect in corporate bodies of men leading almost of necessity useless and indolent lives, and in whom very indistinct views of moral obligation were combined with a great facility for violating them." Moreover, these accusations were of long standing and had been urged by many dispassionate observers. Archbishop Morton, in the time of Henry VII., obtained Papal authority for the reform of religious foundations, many of whose inmates were reprovved for their disgraceful lives, while the Abbot of St. Albans was severely censured for his participation in monkish orgies.

In 1523, Wolsey, then officiating as Papal legate, instituted a visitation of both the regular and secular clergy in consequence of public resentment of clerical misconduct. Wolsey devoted the revenues of certain convents to the foundation of Cardinal, now known as Christchurch College, at Oxford. But, apart from the sensual sins imputed to the monks and nuns, the suppression of the monasteries had become a question of pressing importance. No doubt the King and his courtiers cast a covetous eye on the wealth and emoluments of the monastic orders, but the clergy as a whole still regarded the Pope as the legitimate head of the Church, and were surreptitiously and even openly opposed to Henry's high-handed ecclesiastical proceedings, and privately endeavoured to make them unpopular. That the clergy were still influential outside the London area "is evidenced," remarks Professor Langmead, "by the insurrections in Lincolnshire and Somersetshire, and the great Northern re-

bellion, styled by the insurgents the 'Pilgrimage of Grace,' which broke out on the suppression of the smaller monasteries, and was imputed to the 'solicitation and traitorous conspiracy of the monks and Canons.'"

These disturbances were mercilessly crushed, neither laity nor clergy being spared, and four years later the King decided to dissolve the more opulent foundations. In defiance of the Common Law, some of these had already been transferred to the Crown, their Abbots being executed for high treason. Now, the remaining 645 monasteries were surrendered, and the Legislature legalized their confiscation in a measure which vested the monarch and his successors with permanent possession of all the real and personal property of the dissolved houses.

The immense amount of wealth thus gathered into the King's treasury would have enabled Henry to dispense with Parliamentary supplies, had it been possible to retain it in his own hands. But, the avaricious and spendthrift ruler was compelled to bribe his adherents in order to secure silence concerning proceedings that had caused many misgivings. A few public undertakings were financed; six new bishoprics were created, but the lion's share of the spoil was distributed among the landed proprietors, either by gift or by sale at nearly nominal prices. The aristocracy and squirearchy had now every inducement to oppose the restoration of Papal power. Obviously, the privileged classes were greatly aggrandized by this vast accession of real estate—the recently ennobled, as well as the representatives of the more ancient families, whose fortunes had declined. Practically coincident with the Parliamentary suppression of the monasteries, several Acts were passed to facilitate the transfer of land which then became more vendible than ever before.

The legislative methods encouraged by the King established the religious revolution on a firm economic foundation. Estates changed hands on an extensive scale, and many recipients resold the land, or part of the land they had purchased or received from the Crown to smaller moneyed men. So firmly entrenched were the present proprietors of the confiscated abbey estates that even in the later Catholic reaction under Mary, the new landocracy remained in undisputed possession. Nor were the ejected monks ill-treated. Save a few who resisted Henry's injunctions and in consequence suffered death, the dispossessed monks and friars were not pauperized. In his *English Monks and the Suppression of the Monasteries*, Baskerville shows that many of the priors and Abbots became bishops or deans, while the monks were generously pensioned, and a very considerable number secured benefices in addition to their pensions.

The secularization of monastic property proved far-reaching in its influences. The passing of the abbey estates into the possession of laymen greatly impaired the power of the priests, particularly in rural areas. In his *History*, Professor Trevelyan notes that: "In London, as in every other town, valuable and conspicuous sites of religious houses and much house property belonging to them passed into lay hands, removing the last check on the ever-increasing Protestantism, anti-clericalism and commercialism of the capital. At Oxford and Cambridge the monks and friars had been very numerous, and had formed the backbone of the resistance to the New Learning." For a time attendance at the Universities seriously declined, but this was soon remedied by the greatly-increased proportion of lay students who entered these seats of learning. As Dr. Trevelyan reminds us: "The Cecils and Bacons fitted themselves by their academic studies to govern the country under Elizabeth, and to foster a new order of intellectual ideas which would never have

taken root if Oxford and Cambridge had been left to the guidance of the monks and friars, checked only by the secular clergy."

Still, education derived little benefit from the disendowment of the abbey lands. As early as 1496 a suppressed Cambridge nunnery was converted into Jesus College. As a rival to Wolsey's Oxford Christchurch, Henry endowed Trinity College, Cambridge, the *alma mater* of so many distinguished men. But the mass of the people were denied the instruction and training they might have received had the monastic revenues been more generously devoted to culture. In England as in Scotland the greedy and grasping courtiers fattened on the spoils.

But the opulence of the monastic orders must not be overrated. Many of the monasteries were deeply in debt as a result of extravagance and mismanagement. Their relations with their tenantry seem to have been similar to those of ordinary lay landlords. Although improvident the monks were frequently easy-going towards those under them, yet, in numerous instances, enclosures had been carried out on monastic estates which sadly oppressed the poor and some of the orders treated their tenants very harshly. Bishop Langland asserted that some of the religious flayed their tenants worse than the secular landowners. In consequence of the extensive speculation in land now in operation, rents were raised. This, however, was by no means universal for the monks had very commonly relinquished control of their estates by granting long leases which held good in law until their expiration.

The much-lauded doles distributed at the convent gates had greatly dwindled. Still, the suppression of a system which bred beggars as well as relieved them at a time when the Poor Law was in its infancy was certain to inflict suffering. For in addition to the vagrants multitudes of monastic servitors were discharged. Perhaps Dr. Trevelyan is right in saying that: "The abolition of the monastic dole had helped to make England consider the problem in a national light, and to make scientific provision for the poor a civic duty enforceable by law. With all its imperfections the Elizabethan Poor Law marked a step forward in social organization, and by the end of her reign foreigners marked with surprise an absence of beggars to which they were unaccustomed in other lands."

The transcription and illustration of manuscripts, with other literary labours of the cloister, had fallen into desuetude, so much so, that Erasmus, More, and other humanists stigmatized the inmates of abbeys as inveterate obscurantists, while they scorned the friars as impudent and unscrupulous exploiters of popular ignorance and superstition. Most of the religious were completely indifferent, when not opposed, to the revival of letters. The plain living and industry of the past had deteriorated into gluttony, intemperance and idleness. While misconduct of a conventual character occasioned intermittent scandals, at the time of their suppression the religious orders seem to have led indolent and unclouded lives with little injury or benefit to the animated world beyond their boundaries. It is surmised that the nuns of the mediæval period never exceeded 2,000, while the monks had decreased some 25 per cent in the course of 300 years, and numbered about 7,000 at the date of the dissolution. For, long prior to Henry's reign a gradual suppression of monastic corporations had been conducted by rigidly orthodox Roman Cardinals and Bishops.

The disappearance of monasticism was long overdue, and prepared the way for better things not only in England, but in Europe as a whole. Save the risings previously mentioned, the disestablishment of the religious houses was consummated with little friction. Nor did the episcopacy hasten to the assistance

of the monks, for the beneficed clergy resented the regulars as rivals and competitors who flourished on their tithes and fees, usurped their ministrations, and refused to acknowledge their Bishop's authority. Thus, the dissolution was peacefully accomplished, and the now unopposed episcopacy easily adapted itself to royal, in place of Papal, supremacy. Moreover, the Abbots who sat with the Bishops in the House of Lords, then aggregating a majority in that Chamber, now disappeared, leaving the temporal peers numerically superior. This reduction of the spiritual peers to a minority proved an important factor in the secularization of the State.

T. F. PALMER.

Ancient Lies

JUST over one hundred and sixty years ago died Francois Marie Arouet de Voltaire, and the pens and tongues that had been unable to answer him while living sprang to life. Though forced against their will to recognize the genius of Voltaire's writings, the campaign of vilification of Freethinkers' lives and principles was begun in earnest, not merely by the paid penmen of church and chapel, but by the authors of those highly moral and (in more senses than one) entertaining works that were so common at the end of the eighteenth century.

One William Butler, in his *Chronology*, a work which was "chiefly designed to be a medium of instruction in ladies' schools," defines chronology as the science that "serves history as an accurate and a faithful guide"—and proceeds to give the following faithful guidance:—

May 30, 1778. Expired at the age of 85, the celebrated Voltaire, who, as a man of letters will stand in the first rank with posterity, for brilliancy of imagination, for astonishing ease, exquisite taste, versatility of talents, and extent of knowledge; but whose memory will be held in detestation by the wise and good, on account of his undisguised impiety, and the indecent and rancorous witticisms which he constantly emitted against the Holy Scriptures. His last moments were, like those of the generality of impenitent scoffers at the Bible, embittered by rage, remorse, self-reproach, and blasphemy!!

Diderot comes in for it later, under the date of his death, July 2, 1784, and this work, in the hope of imparting to its female readers "a taste above fantastic levities," gives the following information about the famous *Dictionnaire Encyclopedique*:—

... a stupendous performance which contains much valuable information in every department of physical science, but as Diderot, D'Alembert, and Voltaire, active editors and supporters of that voluminous work, were sworn enemies to religion of every kind, it displays without restraint or shame the most infamous doctrines of impiety, and a contempt for everything which can make mankind happy here or hereafter. From the time when this celebrated dictionary appeared, may be certainly dated that anti-Christian contagion, which gradually infected every class of society, and produced that effervescence of licentiousness to which the political calamities, that have since nearly involved the whole of Europe, are to be ascribed.

And here in a footnote is a pat on the head for the pious English editors of similar encyclopedias—probably, in Voltaire's words, *pour encourager les autres*:—

Very different has been the conduct of the learned editors of our two great national Dictionaries of the same kind—the *New Cyclopaedia*, conducted by Dr. Rees, and the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. In those splendid monuments of science, religion is always treated with due reverence; its beneficial effects on the welfare of individuals and the public are amply shown; and the most cogent and conclusive arguments are constantly adduced in support of Divine Revelation.

Even that poor melancholy genius Cowper had to give the lie unmerited fame—not as one might expect, in his *Lines Written in Madness*, but in his poem *Truth*:—

"The Scripture was his jest-book, whence he drew,
Bon-mots to gall the Christian and the Jew.

An Infidel in health—'But what when sick?'
Oh then a text would touch him at the quick."

One can almost hear the high-pitched laughter of an old man of eighty-five echoing round the cold cloisters of the Abbey at Sellices.

MICHAEL BLAKE.

Acid Drops

The philosophical historian of the future will surely find some material for a chapter on the barbarism of the twentieth century when he notes that the greatest scientific congress of the year had to concern itself with the question of whether science had developed too far. To a genuinely civilized people the question of whether we could have too much knowledge or not would sound like a clumsy joke, although there are quite a number of our clergy, catchpenny writers, and sham philosophers who have been seriously discussing whether we ought not to call a halt to man's conquest of nature. Man can never know too much, but he can abuse the knowledge he has, and that is possible whether knowledge is at a high or a low level. To the fool it seems more terrible to use knowledge to kill through bombs, than it does to kill with a piece of flint fastened to a bit of a tree. To the wise man it is an indication that genuine civilization never does depend upon the amount of knowledge we possess, but to the use we make of the knowledge we have. And one might as well propose that we cease to make sharper carving knives because someone may start cutting his wife's throat with the sharp one he has.

The general fault lies with those who have the control of affairs. It is not the fault of the inventor of the aeroplane that the chief use of it by so many of our Christian countries is to drop explosive bombs. It is more the fault of a Government that will pour out money like water when it is to prepare for war, but will carefully dole out as much as it is compelled to spend on the betterment of life in general. It is an evil that our whole education is impregnated with the glory of war and the greatness of the soldier. For one statue of our scientists and philosophers that meets the public gaze, we have a dozen of soldiers. On all public occasions the first impulse is to use it for a military display. "The King marches at the head of his troops," or "The King leads his Navy out to sea," are customary headings seen in newspapers, and had we not recently the public statement that a nation makes its entry to manhood through war? We give a successful title and a hundred thousand pounds or so, to a successful general, and leave artists and men of letters and scientists to fight poverty in their old age.

Come down to the plain and brutal truth. We do not think there is any real objection to the destructive power of the bombing-plane. Any Christian nation would hail it with joy, if it were the only one that possessed it. It is because all have it, and each may sorely punish the other that the protest is raised against its use. Look the fact in the face and it is fear that lies at the bottom of this protest. War is becoming domesticated. It may reach us all in our homes. The civilian will have, not merely to pay for war, but to share its dangers. It is really this that lies at the root of a great deal of the outcry against war. Of course it is camouflaged, and if there is one country in the world that knows how to give whatever is done a moral cloak, it is ours. So the question is being asked, "Do we know too much?" As if war is not as bad when fought with old-fashioned weapons as when it is fought with modern ones! Perhaps we have in the situation a proof of what we have often said, that war feeds on fear and exploits courage.

The *Patriot*, one of those obscure papers that appears to feed the more ignorant of the more intolerant section of Conservatives in this country, has made a discovery. It seems that the Council of Atheists in Moscow trans-

lated the "Communist" Hymn Book into forty-six languages. This is apparently enough to justify a world war being declared against Moscow, although it is only copying the translation of Christian hymns into more than forty-six tongues. But the serious thing is that Moscow ordered its "godless anthem" to be "rendered officially for the first time at the Atheist Congress in London." The devilishness of Moscow is shown by the fact that the Committee responsible for the arrangement of the Congress programme, and without whose sanction nothing may be done at the Congress, knows nothing of this order. We must next expect to hear that at the last moment the Russian secret police will take charge of the Congress, hold all its present management as prisoners, and sacrifice Christian babies, and eat them in a blasphemous imitation of the cannibalistic side of the Christian creed. We take it that the mentality of the patrons of the *Patriot* is prepared for such a proceeding.

The Old Street magistrate will have earned the thanks of Hitler, Goebbels, Goering and Co., to say nothing of our own highly-placed admirers of the German regime. For Mr. Metcalfe thinks it is an outrage that aliens fleeing from the German terror should find refuge in this country. And it was with evident pleasure that he gave six months hard labour to two men and one pregnant woman, who had entered this country without passports. Hear, Hear! What is Germany to do if other countries permit Germans to escape the rubber truncheon, the concentration camp and the drawn-out torture of men and women by the advocates of the new "Aryan" culture? It is good to have such sentiments expressed officially from the judicial bench. It will do so much to raise England in the estimation of the more civilized parts of Europe, and may even encourage them to follow the example set by Mr. Metcalfe.

It is said in the press that the Glasgow Exhibition, while on the whole a great success, will probably not attract the number of visitors that was expected, in spite of the figures up to date running into millions. If it is not the success it might have been, those responsible have none to thank but themselves and the Sabatarians. Sunday opening would have swollen the number of visitors immensely. It was the best day of the week for visitors both local and from a distance. But the most powerful statue of the exhibition was at the door. It was invisible to none but the eye of the anthropologist, and he saw every Sunday a model of a hideous Oriental deity who demanded the sacrifice of one seventh of each person's time that might otherwise be spent in recreation or education. One day the people of Glasgow will know better, as will the people of other places.

Providence works in a peculiar way, or perhaps it is that there are fashions in heaven as on earth. The other day, for example, Mr. H. W. O. Atkins, was addressing a "children's mission" at Princes Risborough. He stood there with a Bible in his hand when the marquee in which he was standing was struck by lightning, and he was killed instantly. All the children, except one little girl, escaped injury. In the old days this kind of death was reserved for those who had offended God by staying away from Church, or expressing disbelief. Nowadays the Lord seems to share his favours on a more general scale—unless it is that he is getting uncertain in his aim and really intended striking down some local unbeliever.

There is a sincerity which is indifferent to logic or ridicule. A sense of humour would urge many of the clergy to abandon positions which—if of any use at all—serve only to show the uselessness of religion. The Rev. J. A. Findlay explains:—

The real reason why no attack was made by Jesus or His apostles upon such abuses as war and slavery was not that they were unaware that these were monstrous abuses, but that they believed that they were simply part of the inevitable consequence of sin, and would be brought to an end by God in His own way and at His own time.

How consoling that must be to the genuine Christian character! War and slavery, with all their consequences, are sanctioned by God as part of his plan that the price of sin should be paid by the descendants of those who sinned, generations after the real sinners were dead, and probably in heaven. But he will end it all "at his own good time." It seems that Hitler's ethics in punishing Jewish children because their parents were Jews is really an imitation of God. Neither is there any use of our trying to bring war, etc., to an end. God will do it in his own good time. What a God! And what a religion! Probably we have here the reason why so many bad characters have been attracted to Christianity and are now among "the brightest gems in the Saviour's crown."

The *Methodist Recorder* is occasionally humorous. Comic would be the better description of the article facetiously headed "Nonconformist Principle and the Education Act." We quite understand that the Methodists—like other sects—are angry because as they say:—

That the Romanists gain enormously by the 1936 Education Act is beyond doubt,

but their abhorrence of "Romanist" speculation would instantly disappear if Methodists shared the "thousands of pounds" which they say have gone to Catholics. Nonconformist impudence has seldom been quite so frankly stated as in the article under notice, which threatens tooust Catholics and Freethinkers alike from participation in publicly financed education:—

The next step is to see that in all the schools Bible-teaching is only given by those who are prepared to give it with intelligence and personal belief. If a Roman Catholic is head of a Council School he must in this matter pass a self-denying ordinance and see that others properly qualified furnish the teaching which he is incapable or unwilling to give. The same thing will hold true in the case of an Agnostic head. In both these matters our local leaders should be on the watch.

"Principle" indeed! It is enough to make a cat laugh.

Many people must often have wondered what was wrong with our Statesmen when they see the blunders (to put it mildly) of their policies. It is all cleared up now. Dr. Patijn, the Dutch Foreign Minister, addressing the Oxford Group, declared that:—

The need of the world is God-guided statesmen. . . freed from selfish ambition and fear of the people.

We know nothing about Hitler's personal ambitions, but we know for certain that he has "no fear of the people" now that he has put so many of them where they can do him no physical harm. The ex-Kaiser and the late General Haig were both "God-guided"—guided in opposite directions!

More testimony to the same end. Miss Jane Stoddart has some interesting studies of famous people in her *Harvest of the Years*. She knew many well-known preachers of whom she tells amusing and other anecdotes. Dr. Campbell Morgan, for instance, lost several personal intimate friends in the sinking of the "Titanic." Bowed down with genuine grief he had the courage to preach immediately after from the text:—

The Lord sat as king at the flood; the Lord remaineth a King for ever.

So God was responsible for the drowning of the people on the sinking of the "Titanic"! He is king of the flood. Well, there was no mistaking the fact of Campbell Morgan being a Christian. If the same callousness had been manifested by an ordinary man in relation to an ordinary drowning, everyone would have called him a brute. When a Christian closes his eye to obvious facts, and remains undisturbed in the presence of horrors such as the sinking of the "Titanic," he shows what a true Christian he is. And we agree with that, at all events.

Now that Islam is being propagated in England, and claims for itself the title of a "divine" religion, it is refreshing to find it going the way of other divine religions and becoming quite intolerant. Some Indian Moslems, members of the Jamait-ul-Muslimin Society, held a meeting in an East End hall, the other day, and angrily protested against the "insults" hurled by Mr. H. G. Wells against Muhammed in his *Short History of the World*. It is true that Mr. Wells described the famous prophet of God as "a man compounded of very considerable vanity, greed, cunning, self-deception, and quite religious passion," and his book, the Koran, "as certainly unworthy of its alleged Divine authorship." But the best answer would be to show Mr. Wells was wrong, and not ceremonially to burn a copy of the book—which is so like Christianity. Perhaps all these religious folk would like the author boiled in oil as a punishment, or only just tortured to death. How lovely are the passions fanned by "divine" religions!

The wonderful cures of incurable ailments which increase the further we go back in the history of Lourdes, and mysteriously decrease in number the more we demand unimpeachable evidence for them, seem in these days of unfair scepticism fewer and fewer, and look like disappearing altogether. A pilgrimage from Nottingham has just returned, but, alas, says Fr. E. Ellis, "there were no major cures, but there were several definite ameliorations, and I can truly say that everyone is better for the experience." Even a cheap patent medicine is often capable of "definite ameliorations" in people who are sick, and probably has a far more definite percentage of successes in this way than "our Lady" at Lourdes. But "the lie in the mouth of the priest" is never so strong as when it is used to bring hope to the sick, that is why the colossal imposture of Lourdes still subsists.

One of the writers on the *Universe* ridicules the idea that there is no more work for the truly religious "exorcist" in these materialist days. It simply is not true, she claims, that "the increase of the knowledge of disease" means "the cherished theory of 'possession' has had to be abandoned," and that there are no more evil spirits. First of all, the facts rests upon "the authority and experiences of our Lord" as well as upon the Church; and secondly "there is to-day a wider and more profound belief in Possession by the Devil than there has been for centuries." Quite so—but by whom? The converts to Roman Catholicism, of course, and by many other "true" believers in Christianity. But for anybody to say in any company which can be designated as intelligent that he believes in the "Devil," or in "possession," is to put himself into the category of the ignorant and the semi-civilized.

People at Ferring, near Worthing, are said to be annoyed by midnight parties bathing in the nude, and the acting vicar there threatens to intervene "if the position becomes very bad." We suggest that people who go about at midnight with no other purpose but to spy are merely "peeping Toms," or characters akin to the depraved prowlers who dog courting couples in secluded haunts. A woman bather had the courage to remark: "I don't know about the other bathers, but I bathe in the nude because I like it." A very sound reason too. A pity our "morality" defenders cannot clear their lecherous minds before wandering about—especially where they are likely to transform decent-minded people to birds of their feather.

[Fifty Years Ago

PRIESTS, and their privileged friends, have in all ages sought to mould the plastic minds of children. They know that as the twig is bent the tree inclines, that the child is father of the man; and that whoever masters the young brain has the sovereignty of the world in his grasp.

The Freethinker, August 26, 1888.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

S. G. HOGG AND A. HANSON.—Letters are held over till next week.

W. FLETCHER.—Next week. The exordium was quite unnecessary.

M. A. (Mrs.) BINSTAD.—Letter received. You will permit us to offer our heartiest congratulations on an intelligence so penetrating that after glancing at a single issue of the *Freethinker* it is able to critically estimate and definitely condemn the Freethought movement as a whole.

NORMAN NORTH AND "SERHENHA."—Sorry we are unable to use MSS. sent.

C. ROSE.—Interesting, but hardly sufficiently so for publication.

TED SMITH.—We note your opinion that our "Views and Opinions" on "Man's Greatest Enemy" is stupid. We may help to confirm your conviction of our immovable stupidity by remarking that we are not convinced of our stupidity—that is, not in this instance.

H. T. DERRETT.—We are obliged for cuttings from the *Glasgow Daily Record* on foreign missions. Some of the letters are very much to the point. Of course missionary work has some well-intentioned men and women in its service; but on the whole it is one of our most notable pieces of religious imposture in which the well-intentioned are led for the benefit of the cunning and the unscrupulous.

G. TODDUNTER.—"A hit, a palpable hit!" But such things will occur. Anyway it will, at worst, have contributed to the gaiety of the breakfast table.

J. MITCHELL.—Thanks for address of likely new reader; paper being sent for four weeks.

To Circulating and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—E. Horrocks (Australia), £2 5s.

"CINE CERE."—Received, and papers will be sent as instructed.

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

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

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The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.

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

Sugar Plums

Applications for reserved seat tickets for the Scala Theatre meeting on Sunday evening, September 11, have far exceeded the number of seats available, and any further requests for tickets cannot be met. Those who do not receive tickets, already applied for, within the next day or two must consider themselves unfortunate. We regret the many disappointments, but there will be unreserved seats available on the Sunday evening when the doors open.

A correspondent suggests that in view of existing circumstances it would be well to reprint as an article in these columns, the chapter on "The Case of the Jew," from Mr. Colien's *Creed and Character*, which was pub-

lished about twenty years ago. We may do so, with such slight additions as will bring it up to date.

Mr. G. Whitehead will address meetings for the Edinburgh Branch N.S.S. during the week commencing to-day (August 28). Details will be found in the Lecture Notices column, and all local saints are asked to help in making the meetings representative of the movement in Edinburgh.

Mr. George Bernard Shaw is never at his best when he ventures on scientific subjects, and this holds almost as strongly of his handling the scientific side of sociological questions as of others. Take, for example, the following. He says, a man

may have a Roman Catholic ancestor; but which of us have not. . . Protestantism has absorbed many millions of Roman Catholics since it was founded by a Roman Catholic . . . (and) the observing confessing Roman Catholic may well present a problem to Protestant States; but an absorbed Roman Catholic presents no problem at all, and must be classed as a citizen of the State in which he was born.

That seems fairly correct, although not wholly so, and it fails on a very important point. But on looking back to Mr. Shaw's letter we find that we have misquoted, and some words not used by Mr. Shaw have crept in. So we give the passage from his letter just as it appeared in the *Observer* for August 20. It has been said that the translator of Mr. Shaw's plays in Germany is a Jew. So Mr. Shaw says:—

He may have a Jewish ancestry, but which of us have not. . . Christianity has absorbed many millions of Jews since it was founded by a Jew. The observing, *circumcised* Jew from the Ghetto may still present a problem to Gentile States but an absorbed Jew presents no problem at all, and must be classed as a citizen of the State in which he was born.

In the second paragraph I have underlined the words for which others were substituted in the first passage; we invite readers to think of any sense in which the statement that does not fit Roman Catholics, or Protestants who have been Roman Catholics, and who have become Protestants as well as it does Jews. If it be said that the Jewish religion sets a barrier between Jews and Gentiles, the statement is just as true of Roman Catholics versus Protestants. And we should be the last to dissent from this statement. As we have often pointed out, religion, save in the most primitive conditions, always acts as an anti-social and anti-progressive force.

Mr. Shaw suffers, in this instance, because of his definiteness of thought and phrasing, and when a man is wrong, definiteness of thought and language make for his undoing. Why is a Jew who carries out his religious customs, more of a problem than a practising Roman Catholic? Each has his own religious interests which differ from the interests of the majority around him. On the broad field of political and social life Catholics and others will meet and work in union; on the field of religion they will follow separate paths—and that is true to a smaller extent of Protestants. Perhaps Mr. Shaw can say in what manner the "observing circumcised Jew" differs from the practising, confessing Roman Catholic, with his avowed allegiance to a foreign potentate? We wonder!

What Mr. Shaw ought to have done when it was suggested that the German agent was descended from Jews, was to say that this had no more bearing upon the question than is the fact that he is descended from savages. If he had wished to put his sociology on a scientific basis, he might have gone on to say that considered as a nation or as a race, there is no such thing as Jews, any more than there is a Mohammedan race or a Mohammedan nation, a Roman Catholic race and a Roman Catholic nation. There are Frenchmen, and Germans and Spaniards and Englishmen and Americans who are believers in the religion that is known as Judaism, just as there are Indians and Turks

and Britons, and Algerians, and Africans who are followers of the religion preached by one called Mohammed. And that is an end of it. The Jewish nation does not exist, it never has existed. Even if the "Jewish State" gets established in Jerusalem or anywhere else, there will be no Jewish nation or a Jewish race, and this for the simple reason that race and nationality rests upon a basis entirely distant from religious belief. We have been trying for forty years, in this journal, to drive this lesson home, and we were glad to see that one of the lecturers at the meeting of the British Association emphasized the same points. It is a lesson of which the world stands sadly in need.

Not often do we read a book with so much enjoyment, interest and agreement as we have felt when reading *Scientists are Human*, by Dr. David Lindsay Watson (Watts & Co., 7s. 6d.). In the main Dr. Watson's theme is one with which readers of this journal will be familiar—it is that of the vital distinction between knowledge and understanding. *Science* should stress and cultivate the latter. But the "scientist," as Dr. Watson points out, is often one who is able to "go through the mysterious locus-pocus, wear the impressive robes (and) blandly intone the liturgy." Many years ago Herbert Spencer pointed out that there was a struggle for existence between ideas as between structures, and when an idea was unfitted to the environment it died out, or failed to gain recognition. It might even disappear, and to the facile comment that an idea will sooner or later find expression, Dr. Watson retorts with a query concerning the ideas that have been suppressed for long periods, and then find expression in a distorted form. Science is full of examples of this kind. Even to-day the established doctrine of evolution is presented in a form that will, we hope, make a better educated generation of the near future open its eyes.

The truth here is, to follow Dr. Watson, that science is a social product, and the scientist brings to his task a mental pattern born of his social environment, and the knowledge he gains is forced—often very awkwardly—to go into this inherited social mould. Hence Dr. Watson's title for his book, not *Science is human*, but *Scientists are Human*, that is, they are a social product, but lacking the genius to make this social endowment their servant they permit it to become their master. It is perhaps a dim perception of this truth that is responsible for the sometimes ill-judged criticism made by Mr. Bernard Shaw. The *non-science* of scientists would make a very interesting book, and we commend the suggestion to Professor Hogben as the subject would form, in his hands, a very lively and enlightening volume. We need to remember, as Dr. Watson puts it, that "A truth, even a scientific truth, does not stand apart from the means by which it is learned." Take the learning exhibited by many of those who come forth from our public schools and universities and the truth will become a truism. They have been taught so well, that they are forever stopped from being educated.

There are two chapters in Dr. Watson's book that we strongly commend. These are chapter IV., on "Science as an Expression of Social Organization," and chapter V., "Must we Measure to Know?" The first emphasizes the truth that as Science is an expression of the social life (not the economic life; it must be noted that that basis is too narrow) an inevitable consequence of this is that by creating institutions and directing general education on the lines of what has been, "scientists" become conservative in their attitude through the immense "interlocking network of universities, laboratories, etc." How much a man has to unlearn after passing through the established educational curriculums, and how much of the world's best and most original work comes from those who have had to fight hard for recognition, any history of ideas will prove—when the said history is not written under the overwhelming influence of obstructive conservatism. Dr. Watson's examples in support of this part of his thesis are very impressive.

The second chapter asks the question that has been asked for years in these columns: Is science confined to dealing with that which can be measured by a yard-stick or weighed with a pair of scales? Dr. Watson's phrasing of the question is "Must we Measure to Know?" In the attempt to provide a basis for something that might be called a religion, mainly because it lies beyond the region of proof, there has been a concerted attempt to limit science to handling the ponderables only, leaving the imponderables to religion. This is the standpoint adopted, cautiously, by Eddington and, very incautiously, by men such as Jeans. The curious thing is that so many of those who are, at least formally, opposed to religion, should have accepted the limitation, and have tried to prove that one day science may bring everything under the "laws" of physics and chemistry. The so-called "mystics" have thus found them fairly easy game. Naturally, as we have been fighting against this unscientific position for many years, we are pleased to see Dr. Watson arguing that *science deals with the whole of experience*, and not with merely that which is weighed and measured by scale and yardstick. The work of science here is to devise new caluli when the old ones fail in application. "Laws" of science must be framed to cover the phenomena under observation, instead of the impossible task of trying to force all classes of phenomena within the "laws" devised to cover specific groups. Already much better work is being done in this direction, and of these attempts Dr. Watson gives interesting examples. But we must stop somewhere in noting this strikingly interesting work, and we stop here, once again strongly commending it to our readers.

Peter Annet—1693-1769

AN APPRECIATION

(Concluded from page 533)

It was, however, his periodical, *The Free Enquirer*—one of the earliest Freethought journals—of which nine numbers only were published, dated October 17 to December 12, 1761, that brought Peter Annet's name prominently before the public. His chief contribution, *A Review of the Life and Doctrines of Moses, the celebrated Legislator of the Hebrews*, formed the whole contents of numbers 3, 4, 5, 8 and 9, and is a veritable masterpiece. It was exceedingly courageous and audacious of him to start his weekly at that time.

Jacob Ilive, a printer's son, born at Bristol, 1705, who set up as a printer and type-founder in London, had become an active Deistic writer and lecturer. He had ridiculed Christianity, and the Church and State savagely conspired to crush him. For denying, in a pamphlet, the truth of revelation in 1753, he was pilloried thrice and sent to hard labour for three years. He wrote some pamphlets while in prison on the reform of the penal system, and survived to continue his activities. McCabe styles him "one of the bravest of the Deists," and states that "he used to lecture in London halls on 'The Religion of Nature.'"

Undeterred by knowledge of what had happened to Ilive, and was as likely to happen to him, Annet brought out his paper, and in it he vigorously penned a tremendous onslaught on the authenticity and credibility of the Bible history. He proved the fallacy of the idea of divine inspiration, uprooting some and rendering insecure other foundations on which Christianity has built its creeds.

Consequently he was hauled before the courts, and finally brought before the King's Bench in the Michaelmas Term of 1762. He was tried for "Blasphemous Libel," the information stating that he had ridiculed the Holy Scriptures in the *Free Enquirer*. For this he was convicted, sentenced to suffer one month's imprisonment in Newgate—to stand twice in

the Pillory—once at Charing Cross and once at the Exchange with a label "For Blasphemy" attached to him—then to undergo a year's *hard labour* in Bridewell, to pay a fine of 6s. 8d., also to find securities, himself in £100 and the securities in £50 each, for his good behaviour for the rest of his life. This savage, vindictive and inhuman sentence was pronounced on Peter Annet, then in his 70th year, by the professed followers of the "meek and lowly Jesus," and they saw to it that it was rigidly enforced.

Moncure D. Conway, in his monumental *Life of Thomas Paine*, observes "Annet's *Free Enquirer*, aimed at enlightenment of the lower classes, proved that Freethought was tolerated only as an aristocratic privilege; the author was pilloried (December 14, 1762) just thirty years before the cheapening of *The Rights of Man* led to Paine's prosecution" (December 18, 1792).⁸

Wheeler mentions that "It is related that a woman, seeing Annet in the pillory, said 'Gracious! pilloried for blasphemy. Why, don't we blaspheme every day?'" He also cites another anecdote: "Being asked his views on a future life, Annet replied by this apologue: 'One of my friends in Italy, seeing the sign of an inn, asked if that was the *Angel*. 'No,' was the reply, 'do you not see it is the sign of a *Dragon*?' 'Ah,' said my friend, 'as I have never seen either *Angel* or *Dragon*, how can I tell whether it is one or the other?'"

There is a short, unsigned article in the *National Secular Society's Almanack* for 1877, edited by Bradlaugh and Charles Watts, on Annet, which—after recording his sentence—relates: "We are glad to say that there were men in England who did their utmost to mitigate this very severe sentence. Their efforts were, we believe, unsuccessful, Government being then, as it is to-day, interested in bolstering up superstition. The account from which we have quoted the items of Peter Annet's sentence, and which was published soon after the trial, goes on to state: 'He has suffered already a month's imprisonment in a gaol, perhaps the worst in the world, among thieves, highwaymen, murderers, etc., and where it is next to a miracle a man broken down by 70 years could exist so long.' That such an infamous sentence should have been inflicted on a feeble old man, against whose character for honesty and benevolence, malice itself had never breathed a whisper, was a disgrace to the eighteenth century and to the laws of England."

By the way, Ambrose G. Barker, in his brilliantly written and illuminating brochure, *Henry Hetherington*, issued by the Secular Society, London, Pioneer Press, March, 1938, narrates at some length, how outspoken Freethinkers were treated in the nineteenth century. The persecuting proclivities of the Christians are still evident to-day, as witness their snarling denunciations of and attempts to secure state prevention of our International Freethought Congress.

It is noteworthy that the poet Goldsmith (1728-1774) forms an interesting connecting link between Voltaire and Annet, and Thomas Paine. The latter corresponded and became acquainted with him in 1772. When Voltaire lived in England, 1726-29, and became friendly with the Deists of that time, Annet had not yet published anything nor come to town, and Paine was not yet born. Years later Goldsmith visited Voltaire abroad, and was so impressed that he wrote a *Life of Voltaire*. As regards his friendship with Annet, in his *Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith*, John Forster, after recording the Poet's having joined the Robin Hood Debating Society in 1762, remarks, in the customary Christian style:—

One of the members of this Robin Hood was Peter Annet, a man, who, though ingenious and deserving in other respects, became unhappily notorious by a kind of fanatic crusade against the Bible, for which (publishing weekly papers against the Book of Genesis) he stood twice this year in the pillory, and was now undergoing imprisonment in the King's Bench. To Annet's rooms in St. George's-fields we trace Goldsmith. He had brought Newbery with him to conclude the purchase of a child's book on grammar by the prisoner, hoping so to relieve his distress; but, on the prudent bookseller objecting to a publication of the author's name, Annet accused him of cowardice, rejected his assistance with contempt, and in a furious rage bade him and his introducer good evening. Yet the amount of Newbery's intended assistance was so liberal as to have startled both Goldsmith and Annet, no less a sum than ten guineas being offered for the child's grammar, though for the "completion of a history of England," he had just given Goldsmith himself only two guineas.

When Annet's sentence expired he came out of prison wrecked in bodily health, but his mind as clear, alert and active as ever. He started a small school at Lambeth; Julian Hibbert states that "he taught his pupils very slight respect for the Old and New Testaments and gradually lost his pupils." However, for a while, at anyrate, the school secured him a sufficiency of leisure and means to accomplish still something more for the Cause so dear to his heart, for, in 1766, he brought out *A Collection of the Tracts of a Certain Free Enquirer, noted by his Sufferings for his Opinions*. In 1768 he was engaged in preparing a volume of his *Lectures* for publication, but it seems almost certain the issuing of the book was delayed by his death on January 18, 1769. Anyway, my copy of *Lectures* is printed as *By the late Mr. Peter Annet, Corrected and revised by him just before his Death*. London: Printed for the Booksellers, 1822.

The Freethought Movement is greatly indebted to Richard Carlile for re-printing and publishing Annet's *Free Enquirer* in 1826, when it had a wide circulation. His edition has become rare, and I feel firmly convinced that a timely re-publication would be welcomed and would win a vastly wider circulation by appreciative readers of this challenging work. This forcible, shattering exposure of Jewish legends and traditions, on which false foundations are built Christian dogmas and superstition, can only be regarded as "out of date" when their churches become without congregations, their creeds are acknowledged fabrications of cunning priestcraft, and their parsons have to find honest work instead of preaching *for pay* about miracles and mysteries, to mislead and keep in subjection the credulous people.

In Peter Annet's and even in Carlile's time the great mass of the people were ignorant and illiterate, too hard-worked to have leisure or even inclination to think. Now hours of labour are lessened and through compulsory education (of a sort) we can all *read* and the People, especially the working-classes are beginning to *think* and *act* for themselves. Widespread interest in Thomas Paine was aroused by the Bi-Centenary Celebrations last year, and the re-publication of the *Age of Reason*. Peter Annet, that great Pioneer who gave freely, gallantly, brilliantly and untiringly, through long years, of his best, to the service of Freethought—who in spite of social ostracism, hard struggles for a livelihood, cruel persecutions and physical sufferings, remained firm, unflinching, loyal and true to the "best of Causes" to the end, merits renewed recognition and revived interest in his works.

We cannot equal that truly "Grand Old Man" in genius, wit and worth, nor may we be called upon to face the cruel persecutions and prosecutions that he

⁸ *Life of Thomas Paine*, 1st ed. Pulnam's, 1892 Vol. II, p. 194, or in R.P.A. Centenary Commemoration issue, Watts & Co., 1909, p. 234.

endured, but we can all do *our* best to imitate him in courage and consistency, and in "spreading the light" of Truth and Reason.

ELLA TWYNAM.

Hail, Heresy

If a man shaves once a week only, he is unorthodox, but if a man grows a beard he is (in this country) heterodox. Heterodoxy, or heresy, is positive. It is doing something about it rather than just refraining.

It seems that while physical blindness is regarded as a catastrophe, mental blindness is not only convenient, it is cultivated.

Orthodoxy is not, of course, necessarily wrong in itself—but if I were a preacher my favourite text would be, "All things are good, but all things are not expedient."

The orthodox may certainly be good, blessed by the Church, rewarded by the State and respected by the neighbours, but it may be tragically inexpedient.

There is, however, one form of orthodoxy which must be excepted, and it is important to realize the significance of this. The orthodoxy of technical process and concrete achievement is both good and expedient.

A boy in a carpenter's shop is taught to work wood in an orthodox way, that is, in a way found by experience and reason to be the best way. Again, when a batsman makes an orthodox drive he is using a series of movements found to be the most efficient for hitting the right ball along the ground to the boundary.

The good craftsman, whether carpenter, engineer or cricketer, always uses orthodox methods, and this rule is not upset because a good eye or good luck can break the rules and get away with it.

The good craftsman also welcomes an improvement in material or process.

There may, it is true, be a time lag, but this is due not to orthodoxy, but either to the natural conservatism of age or the artificial obstruction of vested interests.

So much for the good orthodoxy of realism. The orthodoxy of abstraction is another matter, and falls under two heads—Social and Intellectual.

Our thanks are due to the Western Brothers for their damaging incursions on the Old School Tie, which is now nearly as comic as the dickie. Personally I have no more objection to scholastic neckwear in its proper place, than I have to church marriages and white ties and tails. What I am hitting at is what this kind of thing generally implies. The static mind, the rigid attitude, the inflexible opinion. The degradation of man to marionette.

I certainly do not despise the glamour and æstheticism of Ascot, Lords and Henley, Bond Street and The Berkeley, and I admire that living to a code, that dedication of service and self-discipline shown by the good officer of the State Services, but it is sometimes necessary for a man to think for himself, and ask what policy in fact he does serve.

The evils of Social Orthodoxy are twofold. On the one hand, as I have suggested, the rigid conventions of social correctness tend to blind the intelligence, kill flexibility and harden the victim to a mechanism of prejudice, stupidity and self-deception. On the other hand, this social good form, with all its prestige of property, aristocratic tradition, and fashionable glamour, can be used, and is used by powers behind the scenes to exploit society for power purposes.

There appears to be a subtle system of rewards and punishments, in which a brilliant but heterodox man

fades out of politics and the orthodox man, the sound man, the man who does the right thing and knows the right people, takes his place in that eligible group from which are chosen the administrators and headmen congenial to money power.

The whole caste of orthodox administrators, judges, civil servants, J.P.'s and officers of the civil and fighting services, so useful in their efficiency and trustworthy service, tend to be more useful to the tyranny they blindly serve than the community they are believed to serve, and it is a real tragedy that these excellent, but rather stupid men are not enlightened by those whose precise job it is to enlighten.

The accepted scientists, philosophers, professors, churchmen and teachers generally are tarred with the same brush as the people they should inform. They represent the most profound and dangerous form of orthodoxy—the orthodoxy of Idea, Thought and Feeling. These popular leaders are good men degraded by a process of institutional conditioning.

A boy, naturally of lively interest, open-minded and intelligent, is carefully taught first at school and later at a university to receive, think, and value certain things only, to accept means as ends, man-made processes as natural laws, temporary expedients as eternal verities, to identify himself with logical structures based on false premises, to value abstractions rather than realities, and so to qualify in that same scheme of rewards and punishments, which promotes the orthodox professor as it promotes the orthodox politician.

Of course, it does not follow from all this that the heterodox way is necessarily the right way, but because the present madness of the world is so associated with dead orthodox thought and dead orthodox ways of thinking, it is vitally expedient, as a deliberate policy, to think in ways other than orthodox, the aim being always to think in terms of what we, as individuals, really want, basically, food and freedom. This is a realism, and the faith we need is faith in ourselves and our fellow-men.

A typical example of orthodox thought is the theory and dialectic of the rivalisms—Communism and Fascism. Buttressed by the near clever argument of the professors, and inflated by the rhetoric of spellbinders, these abstractions may yet destroy the world.

And what a logic! Are you a Communist? No. Then you are a Fascist. Are you a Fascist? No. Then you must be a Communist.

Abstractions can never be achieved, they can only be used as a technique for regimenting and rationing men by dictators, humanely or otherwise.

We have, of course, our own political abstraction. Orthodox Democracy, but we have little of what democracy should give us. We shall get no democracy just as long as we demand Democracy, and do not insist on those benefits which real democracy should give us—those real things which we all want as individuals living in association.

The touchstone by which we can assess the true value of economic and political concepts is simply this:—

Does this in fact give individual men what they really want in the order of first things first.

The effect can be magical. See what happens when we apply it to Economics. Listen.

Thrift is an evil.

Unemployment is an achievement.

Poverty is artificial.

Production is only for use and enjoyment.

'This is heresy. Hail, Heresy!'

N. DUDLEY SHORT.

By the Way

Note: The *Freethinker* is famous for its habit (fatal, I fear, to financial success) of permitting in its columns the expression of any and every school of thought. I am proposing, if the editor will permit, to write here occasionally on various topics which seem to me important. I write as a Freethinker, but, needless to say, I do not expect every reader to agree with my opinions on things in general.—*Onlooker.*

SOME of our clerical friends are very eager to remind us that England is a Christian country, that our modern civilization is a Christian civilization. All our virtues, they would add, are Christian virtues, and one would sometimes wish to ask if all our vices are also Christian vices, and the existence of gambling-dens, dope fiends and brothels are likewise to be attributed to Christianity; but that is an issue which they can rarely be brought to face. Still in the mechanical civilization which we are now forced to put up with after two thousand years or so of Christianity, nothing is more vitally indicative of the general cultural level we have attained than the amusements and entertainments with which nine-tenths of the population have necessarily to occupy their leisure hours.

The faults and follies of the B.B.C. have been often discussed in these columns, but I have never seen any comment passed on the nauseatingly boring performances which some unconscious humorist at Broadcasting House has called "Variety." Nor have I ever seen mentioned the bestial noises, as of supernatural asses braying and subhuman apemen singing, with which our ears are assaulted from the hour of 10.30 or thereabouts until midnight, under the general title of "dance-music." And yet these, apparently, provide the staple fare of the average listener. And all of them take some simple, natural, dignified human emotion, alter it almost out of all recognition by translating it into the idiom of decadence, and then present the result to an almost entirely uneducated public as the last word in modernity.

There was a time, as I can confess under the comforting cloak of pseudonymity, when I was eager to be in the front rank of the moderns, when the very thought of not having read the book or seen the film which everyone was discussing, would have filled me with an acute thrill of horror. Now I have changed my view. No longer do I regard Mr. Michael Arlen (say) as a paragon of all the literary virtues, and Mr. Eden Phillpotts as a Victorian who has somehow contrived to live on into an age when his work is alien and unreal. Rather do I realize that such writers as Michael Arlen are foreign to all that is decent and dignified and pleasant about humanity, whilst such writers as Eden Phillpotts remain fundamentally sane and healthy. And it is no accident, mind you, that Eden Phillpotts, like Thomas Hardy and many another great artist, has always been a Freethinker.

But this is too long as a digression. I must return to the topic of leisure-hour amusements, which it was my intention to discuss. Consider the cinema for a moment. How many films, out of the hundreds showing in London each week, are really worth paying a shilling to see? (And one often has to pay considerably more than a shilling, as some of us will ruefully remember.) I think that if I put the figure at one per cent of the total, it would be the estimate of an optimist. The majority of films, portraying sex questions in that abominably sentimental way which is the bane of all true artists, can only be enjoyed by reason of their almost incredible badness, their complete divorce from every idea connected with the decencies of ordinary life. The stars, chosen fully to represent what the film magnates consider to be the ideal of the shop-girl or the factory-hand, do not act.

They merely strut across the screen, shrieking "sex-appeal" with every step, and yet suppressing every natural, healthy sexual outlook for fear of censorship. They are, in fact, figures in a very shadowy circus—and most of them, in entire unconsciousness of what they are doing, degenerate into very third-rate clowns. When, however, by a stroke of amazing luck, a good film does manage to get produced, it has to descend to the hypnotic methods of modern publicity in order to achieve that modicum of box-office success necessary to make it pay. One remembers, with a sense of shame, the description of the film version of Shakespeare's *Midsummer Night's Dream* as Hollywood's latest laugh riot (!) And if you doubt the truth of what I say, think of the antics through which Robert Flaherty had to go in order to make a reasonable financial success of that masterpiece, *Man of Aran*.

And then there is literature. Literature! Disregarding the worst depths of banality, such as are sounded by *Peg's Paper*, or whatever the wretched rag is called, just think for a moment of the novels which appear, bright in their coloured jackets, to adorn the shelves of the twopenny libraries. A few days ago I was talking to the principal fiction reviewer on one of the great London daily papers, and he told me that he received, on an average, a hundred and fifty novels a week, out of which he usually found the greatest difficulty in choosing half a dozen around which to write his weekly article. It was not that the books were lacking in technical excellence. On the contrary, they were nearly all written with amazing competence. But few of them had the remotest connexion with life as it is; not more than one in a hundred made any attempt to make people think. The majority were either "thrillers" (and "thrillers" are good fun for the tired business man; I know, for I have written one or two, and read hundreds, myself) or "romances." The "romances" (odious word!) were the worst of the lot, for they presented a false view of all the values of human existence—a super-sentimentalized and yet sensual view—which would lead all the women readers to expect more from life than they were ever likely to get.

And now let me sum up. After two thousand years of Christianity all that we have succeeded in producing in the way of entertainment and leisure-hour amusement is a mass of third-rate material, sickening and vile. I assure you that my words are not too strong. A week's listening to the wireless, half-a-dozen visits to the cinema or a course of reading novels, taken haphazard from the shelves of the nearest twopenny library, will soon dispel any doubts which you may feel on that count. The Christian virtues may be praiseworthy (but I doubt it); in any case, the Christian vices far outweigh them in importance.

What, then, can we do? It seems to me that the only solution is for those people with independent minds to refuse to have anything to do with the trash which is fast turning the mechanical worker into a bored attendant at mechanical entertainments. Only by a conscious effort of the will can we withdraw ourselves from these things, but, the effort once made, we shall be happier and healthier for it. When one views the world as a whole one realizes that it is indeed "A mad world, my masters." Let us make sure, at any rate, that it has a few sane people in it.

Of one thing we can be certain. If these futile entertainments go on gaining adherents among the mass of the people (and, unfortunately, that is what they look like doing), the gradual enslavement of the human will must go on. Humanity has been slowly emancipating itself from superstition masquerading under the cloak of religion. Superstition now seems to be taking other guises. Here it is political, and there

"cultural" in outlook. If it is to continue in its gaining of adherents a terrible crash is coming. The pessimists amongst us must be content in hoping that it will not come in our time.

ONLOOKER.

Keep Fit

ALARMED no doubt at the high percentage of potential army recruits rejected on the grounds of being physically unfit, and anxious to keep pace in war-preparedness with Germany and Italy, the Government have launched a nation-wide Keep Fit Campaign.

With very little inconvenience and for a very trivial outlay, one can join an organization under the control of the National Council of Social Service and take a course in physical culture.

There are, of course, the inevitable cynics who, whilst agreeing that the project is all right up to a point, suggest that if the working people had more money to buy food, and had less hours of work, it would have a much more practical aspect. But, if such a course were adopted, then some of the profit-mongers would have bank balances which were not so financially fit, and that is unthinkable.

The Government, so we understand, sent a commission to study the national fitness movement in Italy and Germany. They came away deeply impressed by the efficiency and thoroughness of the physical side of the movement. But, elsewhere, they found cause for alarm. The youth of both countries were being trained to absorb ready-made opinions enforced on them by the respective Governments; they had no opportunity of learning to think for themselves, of forming independent views.

It is most refreshing to have freedom of thought defended from such an unusual source, and the commission are to be commended for their acumen. Not for democratic England the implanting of manufactured ideas, not for us the neglecting, or, rather, the undermining of mental fitness!

Do we infer, then, that mental fitness will also be catered for? That courses in scientific thinking, in logical deduction and induction, and in psychology will be available to all?

The Bishop of Liverpool, Dr. David, speaking at Wallasey Grammar School on July 24 (see *Liverpool Daily Post*, July 25), said that the Government had approached the Churches and requested their help in this physical training scheme. Desiring the development of the whole personality they "wanted the whole of this work to be permeated by the Christian spirit with its awareness of God, the Author and Giver of all growth." There is the answer.

Frankly, there does not seem to be any difference between instilling Fascism and instilling Christianity into receptive minds. Admittedly, teaching awareness of God is an arduous task, since the pupils know as much on the subject as the tutors, but that is the only distinction. "Permeation by the Christian Spirit" is *not* the same thing as giving opportunities of learning to think freely and form independent ideas.

A mental diet of Christianity—that ancient and dishonourable creed, which is so lucidly expounded in the Bible that now it boasts somewhere in the region of 150 interpretations—is scarcely capable of promoting a high standard of national intelligence. For it has one stock answer to all intricate and searching questions—God. It therefore eschews discussion. More, it is hidebound by dogma and ritual; it is unprogressive and violently opposed to even mild reform. In its heyday zealous believers murdered for the glory of its greatly over-rated deity.

When stripped of all its vestments of awe, its aura of sanctity, Christianity, as outlined in the Bible, is nothing more than a somewhat gruesome fairy story.

Yet this is the proposed basis upon which it is hoped to build the mental fitness of the nation. A sickly and infirm creed which has to be carefully protected from examination and criticism is to be foisted upon the people in order to make them strong and rigorous-minded. It sounds too bad to be credible.

Perhaps we have taken too much for granted. Maybe, after all, the Government have realized that a mentally alert electorate would be somewhat difficult to satisfy with evasive replies and meaningless verbiage when its policy was in question. Maybe also its many pious friends have issued a warning to the effect that strong intellects are prone to scorn religion.

So with astute, but scarcely honourable, diplomacy the Physical Training and Recreation Act is to be exploited to keep the masses fit enough for a savage creed to be preserved and work havoc on their minds.

C. MCKELVIE.

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) : 7.30, Mr. Barker.

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

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

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

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Haymarket) : 8.0, Saturday, Mr. D. Robinson—A Lecture.

BURNLEY MARKET : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Mound) : 7.0, Sunday, 8.0, Monday to Saturday, Mr. G. Whitehead. All members urged to support.

GLASGOW BRANCH N.S.S. (Albion Street) : 8.0, Sunday, A. Copland and M. Whitefield. Albert Road, 8.0, Tuesday. Minard Road, 8.0, Thursday. Albion Street, Friday, 8.0, M. I. Whitefield will speak at these meetings.

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Grey Place) : 8.0, every Wednesday, M. I. Whitefield.

HERRINGTON BURN : 8.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (High Park Street and Park Road) : 8.0, Thursday, Messrs. Thompson or Ashby and Elsie Thompson. Queen's Drive, opposite Walton Baths, 8.0, Sunday, Messrs. Thompson or Ashby and Elsie Thompson.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Eccles Cross) : 8.0, Friday. Bury Market, 8.0, Saturday. Ashton Market, 7.30, Sunday. Chorley, Tuesday, 7.30. Speaker for these meetings, Mr. W. A. Atkinson. Stevenson Square, 7.30, Sunday, A Lecture.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE (Bigg Market) : 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

QUAKER BRIDGE : 3.15, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

READ : 7.30, Wednesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

SABDEN : 7.30, Monday, Mr. J. Clayton.

STOCKTON (The Cross) : 7.0, Sunday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Gill Bridge Avenue) : 7.0, Mr. Dalkin (Stockton), "The Foundations of Democracy."

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WORLD UNION OF FREETHINKERS INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS

LONDON—FRIDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, TO TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 13, 1938

ALL sessions will be held at Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1, except that on Sunday evening. This Congress is convened for the promotion of Freethought, and tickets will be issued admitting to its sessions on the distinct understanding that the holders are members of the Rationalist Press Association, the National Secular Society, the South Place Ethical Society, or the Ethical Union, or are sponsored by a member of one of these societies and are in sympathy with the aims of the Congress.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 9	...	7 p.m.	...	...	Reception and Social Evening.
SATURDAY, SEPT. 10	...	10.30 a.m.	...	...	Opening of the Congress by Dr. M. TERWAGNE (Belgium), President of the World Union of Freethinkers.
		Morning Session	...	...	<i>Subject</i> : "The Present Religious Reaction and the Menace of the Vatican." <i>Speakers</i> : JOSEPH McCABE, PAUL BRAUN (Belgium), A. LORULOT (France), A. FLANDERS, J. P. GILMOUR (Chair).
		Afternoon Session : 2.30	...	...	<i>Subject</i> : "Youth, the Schools, and Freethought." <i>Speakers</i> : Dr. F. H. HAYWARD, W. B. CURRY, M.A., B.Sc., R. STRIVAY (Belgium).
		Evening Session : 7	...	...	<i>Subject</i> : "Science and the Churches." <i>Speakers</i> : Dr. DAVID FORSYTH, Prof. J. B. S. HALDANE, F.R.S., Prof. H. LEVY, B. ZAVADOSKY (U.S.S.R.).
SUNDAY, SEPT. 11	...	Morning Session : 10.30	...	...	<i>Subject</i> : "The Reality of a Secular Ethic." <i>Speakers</i> : J. P. GILMOUR, CHAPMAN COHEN, Dr. NOVAK (Czechoslovakia), F. G. GOULD (Chair).
		Afternoon Session : 2.30	...	...	Regional Reports ; South Africa, West Africa, India, China and Hong Kong, United States, etc.
		Evening : 7	...	...	Demonstration at the Scala Theatre, Charlotte Street, London, W.1. <i>Subject</i> : "Freethought and the Struggle for Peace and Liberty." <i>Speakers</i> : CHAPMAN COHEN (Chair), G. D. H. COLE, Prof. LANCELOT HOGBEN, F.R.S., JOHN LANGDON-DAVIES, and others. Separate tickets for reserved seats are issued for this meeting. It is hoped that members will bring as many friends and sympathizers as they can.
MONDAY, SEPT. 12	...	Morning Session : 10.30	...	...	Conclusion of Reports, Resolutions.
		Afternoon : 2.30	...	...	Tour of London with W. KENT (editor of <i>Encyclopaedia of London</i> , author of <i>London for Heretics</i> , etc.). Cost, 3s. including coach and tea.
		Evening : 6.30	...	...	Reception and Dinner at the Trocadero. <i>Speakers</i> : CHAPMAN COHEN (Chair), Dr. C. E. M. JOAD, and others.
TUESDAY, SEPT. 13	...	...	...	...	Visit to the Bradlaugh Tomb at Brookwood leaving the Necropolis Station at Lambeth at 11.40 a.m.

The names of other speakers will be announced later.

The following have promised to speak, to send messages or reports, or otherwise to support the Congress: President of Honour, Edouard Herriot, Président de la Chambre des Députés, France. Prof. Bouglé, Marjorie Bowen, H. N. Brailsford, Gerald Bullett, Prof. G. E. G. Catlin, Prof. V. Gordon Childe, Chapman Cohen, Dr. Stanton Coit, G. D. H. Cole, J. Cottereau, Dr. P. Couchoud, Prof. F. A. E. Crew, W. B. Curry, Dr. E. J. Dingwall, Prof. Sargant Florence, Prof. J. C. Flugel, Dr. David Forsyth, J. P. Gilmour, S. A. Gimson, Prof. M. Ginsberg, Prof. C. Guignebert, Dr. A. C. Haddon, Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, Dr. F. H. Hayward, J. A. Hobson, Prof. Lancelot Hogben, Laurence Housman, Sir W. van Hulsteijn, Dr. C. E. M. Joad, M. and Mme. Joliot-Curie, Sir Arthur Keith, Prof. H. J. Laski, Prof. J. H. Leuba, Prof. H. Levy, Prof. L. Lévy-Bruhl, G. Macdonald, Prof. Malinowski, Miles Malleson, Joseph McCabe, F. S. Marvin, Somerset Maugham, Prof. Molengraaff, Prof. G. E. Moore, H. W. Nevinson, Prof. C. J. Patten, Vivian Phelps, Eden Phillpotts, Llewelyn Powys, Dr. H. Roger, Bertrand Russell, Prof. F. C. Sharp, George Bernard Shaw, H. G. Wells, Mrs. Winifred Whale.

There will be no charge for admission to the Sessions or to the Demonstration. The Dinner will be 10s. 6d. and the fare (3rd class) to Brookwood 2s. return. Early application for all tickets will help the Organizing Committee.

This is the twenty-fifth International Congress held under the auspices of the World Union of Freethinkers, formerly known as the Federation of Freethought Societies. This body was established in 1880 at Brussels. Its first Congress was held in London, and the second of its Council was for four years in London. The last Congress it held in England was in 1887, when it took place in London.

All inquiries and applications for tickets should be addressed to the Organizing Committee, World Union of Freethinkers International Congress, 4, 5, and 6 Johnson's Court, Fleet Street, London, E.C.4.