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

Views and Opinions

Benefit of Clergy

I wish to be fair to all men, even to the clergy, although one of the order, Sydney Smith, Canon of St. Paul's, divided human beings into three sexes—men, women and clergymen. But I realize that in Liverpool at least, the clergy made an important contribution towards securing "Peace." From a recent issue of a religious paper I learn that when the call came the Liverpool clergy were equal to the occasion. During the first stages of the "Crisis," the people of Liverpool—so says the paper before me—said "War will not come, and even if it does it cannot last long, Germany cannot last." But when the people saw trenches being dug, and the whole population being measured for gas-masks, the "facile optimism" disappeared—in other words the people began to be afraid. The fear created was, in all probability, due to the working of what the Archbishop of Canterbury called the "hand of God." Had they remained throughout the country light-hearted and faced the possibility of war with a smile, there would have been no encouragement to continuous days of prayer in Westminster Abbey, and the House of Commons would not have become hysterical when told that Hitler had invited Chamberlain to visit Munich and listen to some more of his demands. That it was part of God's plan is further evident from the fact that if Mr. Chamberlain had been, say, Mr. Churchill, and Sir Samuel Hoare, Mr. Eden, and if Hitler had risked war, the whole structure of German Fascism might well have entered on its last phase. It is only when we see how things work together that we are able properly to recognize the workings of God's hand. And there is nothing unusual in seeing God's hand in war. The war of 1914 was, on the authority of the Bishop of London, a call from God to the British people, and when people hear of some terrible disaster with great loss of life, the expression that springs spontaneously to their lips is "Good God."

Parsons at War

But, says the Liverpool correspondent of the *Church Times* :—

The Church rose nobly to the occasion.

The Bishop of Liverpool's secretary arranged for an intercession service to be held every quarter of an hour. A rota of clergy was drawn up, and each priest conducted the service as he thought best. There was no set service, it was a kind of go-as-you-please bombardment of heaven every fifteen minutes. But, continues the report, the "culminating point was reached when the Lord Mayor of Liverpool announced his intention of being present." It was not merely announced, but Canon Shields toured Liverpool with a loud speaker announcing the non-stop service intercession, in case God, as the Bible said on one occasion, might be away, or, alternatively, to make the news known to any stray angel that might be flitting down Scotland Road. The blood of Liverpool was up, and it was made known to high heaven that this was no mere Orange-Catholic row to which he was invited to listen, but a continuous service of intercession, patronized by the Lord Mayor, and loud speakered by Canon Shields. The services, says the report, were well attended. Even on Sunday, when the weather was bad, and "reception" in heaven might not have been good, there was no great falling off in attendance. The "Peace" was proclaimed; the Lord had done his part, the go-as-you-please string of prayers, the patronage of the Lord Mayor, the blaring of the loud speaker of Canon Shields had done its work, and the Hitlerites had got their own concentration camps ready for those damnable democratic Czechs. It was a great time. The Lord was given an ultimatum, it was received and—thanks probably to the loud speaker—obeyed. God's way and Mr. Chamberlain's way are very much alike. But we must not forget that Mrs. Chamberlain was a constant and well-advertised attendant at the Westminster Abbey services.

Doing Good by Stealth

The noble way in which the Liverpool clergy rose to the occasion may come as a reminder to many that the services of the parsonry to the community are not adequately recognized. This may be because the modesty and meekness of the clergy forbids them making their services public. They believe in doing good by stealth, and they certainly work in ways of which the goodness is not aggressively noticeable. It is to one or two of these unnoticed services of the clergy that I wish to call attention. One well-known writer, Mr. Francis Galton, said that the evil of the Church during one part of its history was that it monopolized, in the interests of the Church, the ability of able men that should have been expended on the world at large. However true that may be of one period in the history of Europe it cannot be said to be true to-day. To

that charge the parsonry now have a simple and adequate reply. They can assert, and prove, that instead of monopolizing the highest intellect of the country in its service, they are content with appointing to very high positions men of ordinary, even mediocre intelligence, and that everything has been done to leave free for social and scientific purposes the best intelligence of the nation. The Church has also shown by its conduct that it is without vanity and undue egotism. In almost every profession—medicine, law, science, and so forth—the tendency is to make entrance harder by raising the standard of examination. The Christian Church acts upon a different principle. Theirs is a doctrine that is admittedly preached to the weak, the infirm, and the adult whose mental make-up is that of a little child. Even Heine was forced to admit that Christianity was a fine creed for cripples. Of these weaker brethren the learned professions take but little heed. But it is exactly to these that the clergy say:—

Ye that are rejected of other learned professions turn with confidence to us. We will take you in. Nay, we will take you the more gladly because of the very weaknesses that are despised by these intellectual aristocracies. With us your intellectual weakness shall be no bar, rather shall it be counted in your favour. Long ago our Lord said that only as you became as little children could you make sure of the kingdom of heaven, and the nearer you approximate to children the warmer shall be our welcome to you and the more certain your advancement in our service.

It is idle to say that we do not desire this class to exist. There are many classes and people whom we do not desire, but, alas, they are here, and we are not all Hitlers or Mussolinis, and cannot torture to the point of death any one whom we do not like. The clergy are here, and somehow or the other they must be maintained. It is entirely a question of what are we to do with the clergy now that they are here. It is surely better to keep the church as a haven for the relatively incompetent than to adulterate the efficiency of the social services by forcing them to move into other spheres of life as a means of their maintaining an existence.

* * *

Let Us be Thankful

Let me again put the situation as I see it. There are certain types of character always with us. These types cover everything from criminality to the loftiest virtues, from sheer idiocy to the most brilliant intellectuality. Each of these types may plead that they are social products, and being here it is for Society to provide opportunities for their living by giving them the occasion for exercising whatever qualities they possess. As a matter of fact Society usually does this. There are openings for every sort of human being, within certain limits of normality. When men or women get beyond these limits, they are confined in prisons if dangerous to the peace of others, or in various institutions if their mental or moral abnormalities prevent their playing a useful, or a not too harmful, part in life.

Now no one would consider the clergy criminals, however violently we may disagree with their opinions. They cannot be classed with those whose abnormalities make it physically dangerous for them to be at large. The Church to-day is the one place where men who are afflicted with the desire to pose as of some importance in life may exercise themselves with the least injury to the community. Their love of exaggeration, their readiness to promise one thing and practise another, their fondness for playing the part of fortune-tellers with regard to an imaginary future state, all find the least harmful expression within the Church. I am not asserting that their influence is

wholly harmless there, only that it probably does less harm there than it would elsewhere.

My plea for the clergy consists in the fact that inasmuch as the Church provides an opening for the exercise of qualities that are already plentiful in ordinary life, it does act as a kind of safety valve for the rest of society. Denied this outlet there is no other field of operation than the political one, which next to the Church takes rank for calculated dishonesty, untruthfulness, unfairness to opponents, and distortion of fact. And on these grounds I think the clergy may fairly claim consideration, and justly hold that so far they may be counted as of some benefit to the rest of the community.

It is strange that this function of the clergy should have been so completely overlooked by their opponents, and still stranger that they should not have set up this plea for themselves. After all it is not substantially different from the plea that has so often been set up as a justification for prostitution, namely, that the presence of the prostitute serves as a safeguard for virtuous women. We may not desire the presence of the Church as an institution, but neither do we desire to have prisons or lunatic asylums. But society being what it is, and human nature being what it is, these things are necessary. And it is surely illogical to spend willingly large sums of money on providing for the weaknesses of some of our fellow creatures, and yet grudge the money spent on a Church that, at least under modern conditions, provides an outlet for those whose activity in ordinary life, might be more harmful, and, in the end, much more costly.

So I am not surprised that the clergy of Liverpool should have acted as they did, and with a non-stop service, patronized by the Lord Mayor and an ecclesiastical dignity calling upon God and man to take heed, they should have so decidedly helped to save us from war—and damn everybody else. When men are in pain they seek a narcotic. When they are in fear they turn to the Lord. The Lord has not saved them from the pain, he has not prevented their realizing the fear, but as pain comes to an end and fear weakens in time, the Lord may as well get the credit for it while he may, and in any case the clergy benefit by the advertisement.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

PIOUS EROTICISM

I was much interested by the extracts you sent me from Newman's letter, which you once mentioned to me before: and amused beyond measure at a Catholic leader finding "amorousness" and "religion such irreconcilable elements." (Well, at any rate, I can hardly be accused of trying to reconcile Venus and Mary, or Jesus and Priapus.) But has he never heard of the last Goddess of his Church, Marie Alacoque, the type and incarnation of *juror uterinus*? It may be convenient, but it is at least cool, for a priest of that faith to forget that his Church has always naturally and necessarily been the nursing mother of "pale religious lechery," as Blake with such grand scorn labels the special quality of celibate sanctity "that wishes but acts not," of holy priapism and virginal nymphomania. Not to speak of the filthy visions of the rampant and rabid nun who founded "the worship of the Sacred Heart" (she called it heart; in the phallic processions they called it by a more and less proper name), he might have found passages from St. Teresa, which certainly justify from a carnal point of view her surname of the Christian Sappho. There is as much detail, if I mistake not (judging by extracts), in her invocation of her Phaon—Jesus Christ—as in the *Ode to Anactoria* itself—which, as Byron justly observes, is not "a good example." As for my poor paraphrase, it (with Delores and the rest) is too mild and maidenly for mention in the same year.—A. C. Swinburne (*Letter to Edmund Gosse*).

The Propaganda of Piety

"The battle of Freedom is never done, and the field is never quiet."—H. W. Nevins.

"To what damned deeds religion urges men."

Lucretius.

RELIGIOUS propaganda is a fearful and a wonderful thing. Its stock-in-trade is bolstering superstition, but its side-lines include vilifying all opponents, particularly Freethinkers. Indeed, in their hatred of Freethought, Christians have excelled themselves so much that they have almost exhausted the language of vituperation, and the dictionary of deceit.

The clergy are past masters at stifling, or circumventing, any movement likely to prove dangerous to them. The original Sunday schools were initiated by laymen with the sole idea of imparting real education to children on the one day of the week on which, prior to the passing of the Factory Acts, they were free to receive it. Nowadays, Sunday schools are not concerned with other than purely theological instruction, and the average present-day Sunday school teacher is far more concerned with the teaching of superstition than with secular knowledge, however elementary.

Similarly, the clergy tried to circumvent the Scout Movement, which was not originally associated with sectarian teaching. To-day, there are thousands of Anglican churches and Nonconformist chapels which have adopted the clothing and paraphernalia of the Scouts in order to attract youth to their places of worship, and so increase the number of their subscribers.

The Public Library Movement was intended primarily to place knowledge within easy reach of the people, who, up to 1870, were very largely illiterate. The clergy do not like public education, and they did their utmost to defeat the nationalization of knowledge. They have always had enormous influence on the local committees of the public libraries, and their one and constant aim has always been to render such institutions, from their narrow and bigoted point of view, entirely innocuous. So long as the shelves of these libraries are stocked with smooth tales, generally of romantic lore, they are quite content. The instant the slightest attempt is made to place before the readers books which make for sanity, they at once display their animosity. The boycott was introduced, and the modern *Index Expurgatorius* contains the names of "almost" all authors worth reading from Bernard Shaw to Swinburne, from Blatchford to Zola. I have seen library catalogues containing replies to Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe*, but no "Riddle"; Swinburne restricted to a slender volume of selections; Balfour's *Foundations of Belief*, but not his *Defence of Philosophic Doubt*; Cruden's *Concordance*, but no *Encyclopaedia Biblica*. There are public libraries where the theological section is swollen out of all proportion, because the local clergy have the pleasant habit of preparing their sermons at the ratepayers' expense. In such abodes of blissful innocence one never sees Freethought publications, nor is one expected to do so. Even popular novelists have not escaped the drag net of the boycott, and Somerset Maugham has suffered in the company of H. G. Wells and Hall Caine.

A campaign of calumny is carried on in the newspaper press. Most Freethinkers are only too familiar with the methods of the Press Boycott, by which all matters relating to Freethought are either excluded altogether or grossly misrepresented by Christian editors in the interests of their religion. Indeed, in some quarters, the conspiracy of silence against Freethought is passing wonderful. The very name is like that of the deity of the Ancient Hebrews, which was never to be spoken. Where the conspiracy of silence is broken accidentally, the Christians display another

aspect of their attitude towards Freethought, which is then lied about, misrepresented, and slandered. As an example, a great Freethinker like Thomas Paine was invariably referred to as "Tom Paine" by the newspaper press of this country, but no editor, no reporter, no leader-writer, however hidebound in his Toryism, ever once dubbed his arch-opponents, "Bill" Gladstone, or "Jack" Bright, or "Bert" Asquith.

Nor does this crusade of calumny end here. Few people are aware that this peculiar Christian habit is extended to literature itself, and that this similar trait is just as apparent in books as in newspapers, magazines, and periodicals. Look, for example, at the so-called encyclopaedias and other works of reference which are to be found in public and private libraries, and notice, particularly, how Freethought and Freethinkers are treated in their pages. Turn to the biographies of the great "Intellectuals." Sins of omission and commission constantly leap to the eye of the reader, who may be a decent person and ill-prepared for this exhibition of the fierce flash of the primitive spirit of the two-thousand-years-old Christian superstition. For, nowadays, Christians are no longer able to burn alive, or torture, unbelievers, and they are obliged, for shame's sake, to answer their arguments, or make some show of defending their own doctrines. Realizing that the spirit of the age is against them, and afraid to be too brutal in the open, they resort to underground methods of attack.

These are some of the latest manifestations of an infamous religious tradition, which may be traced back through the long centuries to the burning of Giordano Bruno, and earlier still, to the murder of Hypatia. It may even be traced back to the Pagan predecessors of the Christian Superstition; notably in the case of Lucretius. As late as the nineteenth century the fortunes of really great writers like Voltaire, Paine, Shelley, Meredith, and Swinburne, were adversely influenced by this crafty and calculated religious malevolence. Recall the persecution of Richard Carlile and of Charles Bradlaugh. Jealousies and unkindness and bitterness are in most human labours, but religion with its insincerities and intellectual meannesses seems to hold a virulent poison all its own, which narrows the vision and blunts the edge of principle.

Freethought everywhere incurs the hatred of the Orthodox, and no enmity is more unscrupulous, more relentless, or more venomous. This garbage is thrown at Freethinkers of set and deliberate purpose. It is meant expressly to discredit the characters and writings of men who look scornfully at the hypocrisies and mummeries of the Christian superstition. Freethought has wrested so many positions from Christianity that in order to support a lucrative vested interest Christian priests will hesitate at nothing to buttress the wavering allegiance of their paying dupes in the pews. The Christian churches will never abandon the practice of lying for the glory of their god. In the ages of faith and ignorance the priests of this "Religion of Love" used scaffolds, stakes, prisons, and torture-chambers; now they rely upon lies, libels, and misrepresentations. Give the clergy power once again, and men will soon discover that the "Church of Christ" is not a benevolent grandmother, babbling of human brotherhood, and brimful of charity, but a plundering profiteer, bent on the exploitation of men, women, and even children, by all the devious methods known to Priestcraft. She is capable of extorting money from the rich on their death-beds, and equally capable of taking pennies from the chubby hands of little children. But let us be under no illusions as to what all this involves. It means nothing less than the mental slavery of the people.

MIMNERMUS.

The Beginning of Wisdom

ANSWERING a ring at the door bell, I was accosted on the threshold by a man with a small leather bag and a few handbills, who assured me that he was one of Jehovah's Witnesses! I might have been surprised at such an audacious claim had I not been familiar with the campaign of Judge Rutherford and his prophetic nonsense. The visitor began to ply me with all sorts of questions as to my religious ideas and beliefs, but I was not to be drawn into discussion, knowing the futility of arguing with a person who places his faith in Bible prophecies. Finding me a hopeless case, he retired with a parting shot of what is one of their stock phrases: The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.

I might have forgotten all about Jehovah and his witnesses by the time I got indoors, had it not been for another incident that took place the same morning, and to which I was an unseen listener. The search for wisdom is often a long and tedious task, but to have a large chunk of it thrown at you gratuitously from over the next door neighbour's back-yard wall, is, I venture to think, a rare experience; especially when your instructress in wisdom's ways is a mere infant in years. It happened on this wise. Little Miss Chatterbox, aged three, brought out her toys and playthings to amuse herself in the open, while her Ma was busy with the week's wash. Suddenly, and in tones that were slow and decisive, she exclaimed: Mummy, didn't you tell me God only cared for good little girls? Yes, said her Ma. Well then, she replied, I don't want *Him* to come and butt in and spoil the fun. The child's life and thoughts and happiness were bounded by her playthings and her mother's love, and she did not want any ghostly spectre to come and interfere with her innocent bliss. And it is to be regretted that many reach the age of seventy-three, without arriving at the sound and simple wisdom of this three-year-old child. They go through life in the haunting fear of some imaginary deity, lest they should offend against his supposed Will.

Whether there be such a thing as Intuition or not, there can be no question that this child had arrived at a most important truth, verifiable alike from the pages of ancient and modern history, and from the Bible itself; that is that the god's have at all times been inimical to the happiness and well-being of child life. From the very earliest ages we read of their wholesale sacrifice to the blood-lust of the gods. The deities of ancient Egypt; of Baal and Moloch in the land of Canaan, as well as those of ancient Mexico and Peru, in America, all slaked their thirst with the blood of these innocent victims. The Jehovah of the Israelites seems to have been own brother to those hideous monsters. Did he not command Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac; while the virgin daughter of Jephtha was offered up as a burnt offering, like a sheep or a goat, to satisfy one of his sacrificial whims? His instructions to the Israelites in their wars with other tribes, were to exterminate them, man, woman and child. And is there not a divine blessing promised to his devotees, who took the little ones of their enemies and dashed their brains out against a stone wall? Pity and compassion He had none; and if He reserved the young maidens who had not slept with man, it was only to gratify the insatiable lust of his barbarous warriors.

A study of the history of organized Christianity also reveals the fact that the Christian Churches, both Catholic and Protestant, have shown the same apathy and utter disregard of the claims of child life. One of the saddest episodes of mediaeval history, both for its futility and its callousness, is what is known as the Children's Crusade, sponsored by Pope Innocent III.

at the beginning of the thirteenth century. Its youthful leader was a peasant boy in France, named Stephen, who declared that he had been commissioned by Christ to rescue the Holy Land from the infidel. Thirty-five thousand children followed him through France, but of this number only five thousand reached Marseilles, where, we are told, they expected the sea to become dry land before them. But the ancient miracle of the Red Sea was not repeated; instead they found some plausible merchants who offered to convey them to Palestine, "for the cause of God and without charge." These merchants were slave-traders, however, and the unhappy children ultimately landed in the slave-markets of Algiers and Alexandria. In the same year thousands of boys and girls set out from the Rhineland for Italy. Many were lost on the way; others set sail for Palestine and were heard of no more. Innocent, the reigning Pope at the time, was utterly blind to the folly and wickedness of such enterprises; and in his fanatical zeal actually used them as a pretext for yet another Crusade. But all his efforts to arouse a fresh enthusiasm were unavailing; and shortly afterwards he was called upon to appear before the Judgment Seat of Heaven, where, if he got his just punishment, he is never likely to suffer from cold feet.

Later ages have the same sordid tale to tell. After 1800 years of the civilizing influences of Christianity, we find children of the age of five—one historian even gives a less figure—being sent down the mines to work ten to twelve hours a day for six days of the week, only getting a glimpse of the daylight on Sundays. At this period the income of the Bishop of Durham was in the region of £40,000 a year, and these children were being paid about a shilling a week. (I narrowly escaped being sent down the pit myself at the age of nine). In the cutleries of Sheffield, in the potteries of Staffordshire, in the mills of Lancashire and Yorkshire, female and child labour was exploited in many cases beyond the powers of endurance of these pitiable slaves. Their life was blighted, and disease was rampant. With the rise of the modern humanitarian movement, when public attention was being drawn to these evils, legislation to remedy them was bitterly opposed. One noble lord said that the withdrawal of child labour from the coal-mines would ruin the industry. And when, in the early part of the nineteenth century, the Ten Hour Factory Bill for women and children was before Parliament, it had no more vigorous opponent than the godly John Bright.

John Wesley is often claimed as a social reformer, but it should be remembered that the manure which forced the growth and spread of Wesleyanism, was the demoralized condition of the English Church and its clergy, to whom any kind of reform was like a nightmare. Wesley might have been a power for good in the industrial and social sphere, but, as Joseph McCabe remarks, the Methodists were too busy singing ghastly hymns about Hell and the Blood of the Lamb, to see such crimes as infant children being sent down a pit to work twelve hours a day. During all these long years of infantile slavery, "The Friend for little children above the bright blue sky," was as callously indifferent to the fate of these tender youngsters, as were the Church and the Bishops, the coal-owners and the British politicians.

Little Chatterbox, in her wisdom, gave God his marching orders during her playtime; and if grown-ups had the same sound sense as Joan, aged three, they would eliminate the superstition of God from every sphere of life's activities.

JOSEPH BRYCE.

The truth is, that evil can grow fast and that good can not.—Garth Wilkinson.

Cultural Reciprocity in the Eighteenth Century

A COSMOPOLITAN spirit very extensively prevailed in Western Europe during the eighteenth century. Armed conflict itself frequently failed to interrupt friendly intercourse between members of the contending communities. The aristocracy and lettered classes conducted a Continental tour as a matter of course, and the untravelled Englishman's education was considered incomplete. Gibbon's favourite residence was at Lauzanne, and men of letters such as Hume, Goldsmith, Gray and Sterne were more or less familiar with the Continent. The great Voltaire dwelt for some time both in England and Prussia, while Ferney became his permanent residence. The sinister spirit of selfish nationalism which now so seriously narrows and embitters public sentiment was then almost unfelt in enlightened circles.

In his *England in the Eighteenth Century*, Prof. Mowat gave us an excellent survey of the Hanoverian Age. Now, in *The Age of Reason* (Harrap, 6s.), he has presented a companion picture of the European Continent of the same period. This volume contains shrewd and suggestive sketches of progressive rulers such as the clever Catherine of Russia, the admirer of Diderot and Voltaire; Frederick the Great, a pronounced Freethinker; and the nominal Catholic, but broad-minded sovereign, Joseph II. of Austria. Continental academies, universities and schools; Goethe's and Voltaire's strivings against intolerance and bigotry; peace propaganda and penal reform, are included in the numerous themes discussed in this work.

Dr. Mowat points out in his chapter on *Cosmopolitanism*, that William Cockerill, who established the famous ironworks at Liège, was a Lancastrian. Benjamin Thompson, born in America of old British stock, not only founded the Royal Institution in London, but became a Minister of State at Munich in Bavaria, and was created Baron Rumford of the Holy Roman Empire. "With the quenchless reforming zeal of an enlightened man of the eighteenth century," writes our historian, "he improved the military system (particularly easing the frightful condition of the private soldier), cleaned the city of dirt and beggars, and made a public park (the English Garden) out of a desolate waste." Another cosmopolitan, Sir John Acton, who became Prime Minister of the Neopolitan State, practically governed its territories during the exciting period of the French Revolution and Napoleon's campaigns.

The internationalism of literature was largely responsible for the temporary triumph of the cosmopolitan spirit. Rousseau's appreciation of Richardson materially contributed to the English novelist's European fame. Also, a freemasonry among authors was fostered by the universal use of the French language. Evidently, so recently as 1905, when Brunetière penned the following words, he little surmised the coming increase of national arrogance and aggressiveness which darkens the world to-day. "If literary cosmopolitanism makes further gains and succeeds in extinguishing blood hatreds which differences of race have kindled, I see there a great gain for civilization and for all humanity. For the hatreds of races, more terrible than all others, have something animal about them, something therefore particularly *unhumane*."

Voltaire's stay in England exercised considerable influence on his thought. His indebtedness to Newton and the English Deists was admittedly great. As Dr. Mowat intimates, the intelligentsia of Western Europe as a whole made invaluable contributions to culture. The Italian Beccaria was a pioneer in penal reform,

and educational improvements were earnestly advocated by the Swiss Pestalozzi. Constitutional and Parliamentary theories were advanced by Bolingbroke, Blackstone and Bentham, in Britain, while the French Quernai and the Scot, Adam Smith were eminent as economists. Science was represented by the Swede Linnæus and philosophy by the Prussian, Kant. "There was no intellectual 'nationalism'; every scholar regarded himself as an exponent and developer of European culture, as a member of the republic of letters. Voltaire and Goethe were the complete cosmopolitans."

Although he intensely admired the genius of Napoleon, Goethe viewed war with marked aversion, and his poem *Hermann and Dorothea* has been termed a long sermon in favour of peace. And, when later reproached for his unpatriotic attitude, the poet replied: "How could I, to whom culture and barbarism are alone of importance, hate the nation (the French), which is the most cultured on earth, and to which I owe so great a part of my own possessions? There is a stage where national hatred vanishes altogether, and where one stands to a certain extent above the nations, and feels the weal and woe of a neighbouring people as if it were one's own."

Voltaire was also a pacifist who employed irony, satire and scorn in his campaign against militarism. *Candide* exposes war in all its naked deformity. Candide himself is seduced into the service of the Bulgarian King, and soon experiences the horrors of war. During the battle the opening cannonade disposes of six thousand soldiers on each side. Then the musketeers enter the fray and "remove from the best of all worlds some nine or ten thousand rascals who infest its surface." Then thousands more perish at the point of the bayonet. The battle over and the *Te Deum* being sung, Candide darts across the heaps of slain to a nearby village which the brave soldiers had burnt to ashes. A ghastly spectacle is presented of rape, rapine and slaughter. Amputated limbs and brains scattered over the earth add to the sorry sight.

In the early eighteenth century penalties for crime were still atrociously severe. But owing to the activities of the humanists, punishments became less vindictive. Ordinary homicides were broken on the wheel, but this dreadful punishment was far exceeded by the treatment of a lackey named Damien, who sought the life of the French King. The would-be assassin was probably insane, and Louis XV. was only slightly injured. Nevertheless, the right hand of Damien was consumed in the flames and then "he was placed on an iron frame and racked; his flesh in places was torn off by red hot pincers; finally he was tied to four horses and was pulled to pieces." This revolting cruelty was inflicted in France so late as 1757.

Owing entirely to the intervention of Voltaire, the infamous miscarriage of justice which led to the execution of Calas rang throughout Europe. Unfortunately many other judicial crimes of a kindred character remain unrecorded. But in this instance, a powerful and determined personality revealed the enormity to the world. Religious rancour accused Jean Calas, a Huguenot, of the crime of murdering his son to prevent his conversion to Catholicism. The father was found guilty and sentenced to being broken on the wheel. Under this infliction, Calas succumbed. The property of the family was confiscated; the daughters were driven to a nunnery, but the widow was permitted to migrate to Geneva, where her mournful story was disclosed to Voltaire. What Lecky terms Voltaire's "storm of sarcasm and invective," raged so furiously, that the authorities ordered the case's retrial; Calas was declared innocent, and a Treasury grant of 30,000 livres was made as compensa-

tion for the confiscated estate of the judicially murdered man's relatives.

Voltaire's endeavour to establish the innocence of the Chevalier de la Barre, a lad of sixteen, who had been beheaded after his tongue had been torn out, when convicted of the crime of desecration, proved abortive. But a youthful companion of de la Barre, who fled and thus escaped torture and execution, secured a commission in the Prussian Army through Voltaire's recommendation.

Still, the humanist agitation against barbarity bore good fruit. Legal torture was falling into disuse. As Prof. Mowat states: "Besides England, Sweden, in the person of Gustavus III. abolished torture in 1780. Frederick the Great had already abolished it in 1740. . . . The Elector Frederick III. of Saxony (1763-1827) had also abolished it. The Bishop of Osnabrück was still permitting infliction of torture in the Osnabrück Prison when Howard visited it in 1781. . . . But in Vienna, Howard, though he saw a torture-room and the terrible instruments of pain, could look at them only as curiosities, for the Emperor Joseph II. had forbidden their use for ever."

The volume under review contains an entrancing description of two celebrated charlatans: Cagliostro and Casanova; and its estimate of the famous Frederick is none too flattering. The Prussian autocrat is delineated as a highly intellectual but bold bad man who never pretended that his seizure of Silesia had any moral justification. But the monarch's misdemeanours were conducted on a large scale, while the others were audacious adventurers who preyed without compunction on the folly and credulity of their innumerable victims.

Joseph Balsamo assumed the title of Count Cagliostro and wedded a handsome and charming lady, who acted the part of Becky Sharp in enticing wealthy novices into her company, while her rapacious partner relieved them of their gold. The Count's "elixir of immortal youth" became very popular with middle-aged and elderly ladies, for Cagliostro persuaded them that despite his youthful appearance he had already reached his 150th year, while his very young and charming wife frequently talked most affectionately of her son as a Dutch naval commander. When this precious pair became better known than trusted in one capital they vanished to another, and in the course of their swindling career they visited nearly every country in Europe. Cagliostro probably planned the projected robbery of the famous diamond necklace, a theme made immortal by Dumas in his *Memoirs of a Physician*.

Quite naturally, quackery and religion formed part of the stock-in-trade of Casanova and Cagliostro. Although utterly unscrupulous, Casanova was a man of parts, who for thirty years led a reckless and licentious life at the expense of his numerous dupes. In middle life this Italian scoundrel entered the service of the Venetian Inquisition as a spy, whose duty, ironically enough was to "assist the Inquisitors in preserving the morals of Venice and extirpating scoundrelism."

The last thirteen years of this rascal's life were spent in a rich nobleman's residence in Bohemia where, in tranquil surroundings, Casanova composed his celebrated *Mémoires*. He confesses himself "a reasonable Christian," who eagerly resorted to prayer as a solace in times of dejection or despair. The memoirs, which appeared posthumously, nevertheless reveal their author's natural perversity, and he seems to have retained the conviction that whatever happiness or misery one experiences "life is the only good that man possesses."

T. F. PALMER.

Acid Drops

Mr. Louis Golding, in *The Leader*, makes a very praiseworthy attempt to protect the Jew of to-day from the anti-Semitic crusade that has gone to such indecent lengths in Germany, and has been adopted by the Fascists in this country, we have reason to believe, in conformity with Hitlerian desires—or commands. But we think Mr. Golding's effort might well have been made without subscribing to the foolish superstition that forms the main theme of the New Testament. He talks of the death of Jesus as the greatest crime in history. It is, of course, not history at all, unless we are dealing with a history of mythology. If Mr. Golding will consult modern works on mythology he will find that the God who is put to death for the sake of saving man is a very wide-spread legend, and that the Christian Church merely offered another version of this story. As Gerald Massey put it, the Christian Church took a piece of mythology which, as such, was quite intelligible, and made the whole thing ridiculous by turning a myth into a piece of actual objective history. And, curiously enough, the power of the Christian Church, and its control over whatever sources of education existed, caused large numbers of Jews to accept the superstition. One need only bear in mind to-day the degree to which the Nazis have created among the present-day Germans a belief in the existence of a purely mythical Aryan race, and the extent to which they have manufactured a new history of Germany, to realize how much easier this kind of trick could be worked with earlier generations.

With that qualification he is right in attributing the sustained antagonism to the Jew as due to the Christian Church. Mr. Golding does not put it that way, he says that persecution of the Jew began with the assertion that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. Stated thus it is the old legend over again, without the explanatory note that in the light of the Christian mythology the Christian Church could never have existed had not a supposititious man-god been put to death. But once over that hurdle the Christian Church made the Jews an accursed people. They also made their God as ridiculous as themselves by first of all sending his son from heaven for the express purpose of being killed, and then outlawing the people who, by doing it, carried out God's plan. Mr. Golding surely possesses enough intelligence to appreciate the absurdity of the whole position.

But the intolerance which the Christian Church inherited from the Jewish religion, and which it intensified to such a remarkable extent, led the Church to keep the Jews as a people apart, accursed by God, and in the darkest days of the Christian superstition they were handy scapegoats as an explanation of anything unpleasant that occurred. In days when storms and diseases were traced to witches and wizards, this was not a very difficult thing to accomplish. The Jew became the scapegoat to carry the sins of his oppressors as well as his own. Hitler is playing an old game, as are the anti-Semites in England, when they count the Jews as at once the cause of anti-capitalism and the upholders of capitalism, the makers of war and the upholders of pacifism, and when they picture a handful of Jews leading myriads of Christians by the nose. There is a vast mass of popular ignorance and passion to which cupidity and rascality and intolerance can always appeal and the Mosleys of England and the Hitlers of Germany have a very easy task to stir this up. Mr. Golding should make a closer and deeper study of the subject. But perhaps that would not be a very popular line.

The joke of the whole thing—if joke is not too light a word for such a vicious and obscene thing as anti-Semitism—is that there is no such thing as a Jewish race. There never was any such thing. There is a religion called Judaism, and believers in it were called Jews. But Jew no more connotes a "race" or a nation, than Roman Catholic connotes an Italian. There are Jews all over the world. There are Jews in Germany who have been Ger-

man Jews for over a thousand years. There are Jews in this country far more British by birth and unbroken descent than is the reigning royal family. There are Jews in Italy who have been Italian for over two thousand years, and who Mussolini, under orders from Hitler, or with a desire to stand well with Hitler, is now deciding cannot be Italians. The Jews have been kept a separate people so far as they followed their religion, as is the Roman Catholic, or the Mohammedan, but the Jew dies when his religion goes. I agree with Mr. Golding that religion is at the bottom of the trouble over the Jew. But I am afraid he will not agree with me that the way to get rid of the kind of thing against which he properly protests is to get rid of both the Jewish and the Christian religion, and to take what care can be taken to see that no other religion rises in their stead.

Those astute advertisers, the Roman Catholic Church and its priests, did not allow such an opportunity as gas masks to pass without putting their hall mark upon it. Some priest devised a badge to affix on all masks, the one for ordinary Catholics having the words "In case of injury call a Catholic priest," while the other had just "Catholic priest" upon it. This astute piece of publicity was more than a move ahead of the other 200 religions we are cursed with in England, but it proves how these people take every opportunity to push their superstitious drivel for all it is worth. We have nothing to say against asking for the help of any religious believer in case of necessity—but only as a man; and in that case, one man seems as good as another.

Cardinal Hinsley, by the way, says that everything points to the Chamberlain peace—it ought to be distinguished from other kinds of peace—being entirely due to the prayers said by his orders and in his diocese. Cardinal Hinsley has, however, a rival in Father Divine, the black Messiah of Harlem. He says the peace was due to the letters he sent to the principals concerned threatening them with his divine anger if peace was not made. After Hinsley's magnificent and sustained lying over the "Godless Conference," we must leave these two liars to fight it out between them. Or, perhaps, they will go to Prague and have a public discussion before a Czechoslovakian audience. There really does seem to be some anxiety among the people of Prague to know exactly who was responsible for the peace that has been given them.

We do not think that we should like to be in the position of those responsible for the handing over of Czechoslovakia to Germany. We have not in mind the political and economic consequences, but the purely human. The treatment given to non-Nazis in Germany and Austria has already shocked every civilized man and woman, and some of the worst phases of this have been kept out of our press. Now Germany is demanding the handing over of a large number of "Germans" who have left the Sudeten and gone to Prague. The Czechs, having completely lost faith in both England and France, and finding that if they are to exist they must come to terms with the dictator of the Continent, Hitler, will in the end have to give them up. When this is done the English Government can raise no objection, because in terms of the "agreement" which has already been broken, Hitler need only reply that the return of Germans to the Reich is no concern of England, and therefore she has no right of interference. We have not had to wait long to see the foolishness of the pieces of paper that Chamberlain brandished in the face of the public, as his apology for agreeing to the placing of hundreds of thousands of people under the Hitler terror.

That we have not exaggerated may be seen by the following from the *Daily Telegraph* for October 12:—

Far graver is the problem of the Democratic German or Jewish fugitives from the Sudetenlands. Despite the assurances of the central Czechoslovak authorities that these people would not be obliged to return to certain death or to the Nazi concentration camps,

it is estimated that 20,000 of them have already been driven back with the utmost severity to the German districts by local gendarmerie or civil authorities.

It is untrue that they have been sent back to the plebiscite areas only so that their votes would not be lost to Czechoslovakia. They have been obliged, often by the use of force, to re-enter territories permanently surrendered to Germany from which they had fled to escape the fate which has now unquestionably befallen them.

What this fate would be Herr Henlein, Commissioner for the Sudeten area, made perfectly clear in a broadcast on Friday, when he said that his political opponents did not deserve mercy and would receive none.

"We shall imprison them until they turn black," he announced. "All those who fled and have been subsequently returned will be treated in the same way."

We hope that Mr. Chamberlain's holiday will have strengthened his nerve, otherwise he will keenly feel such situations as the one above, and others. For example: It will be remembered that Mr. Chamberlain based his defence in the House of Commons on the statements that he was shocked at the demands made at Godesberg, and pleased with the concessions gained at Munich, which he assured the House of Commons had modified the Godesberg demands. It now turns out that Hitler has occupied more territory than he asked for at Godesberg. And Mr. Chamberlain felt he could rely upon the word of Herr Hitler. The thousands who are to be kept in prison "until they turn black," and the others who have been shot or committed suicide, the crowds of refugees, which the Lord Mayor of London saw swarming into Prague at the rate of 1,500 a day, with nothing but their clothing, every bit of their possessions being in the hands of the Nazis, will probably have a different opinion about Hitler and the disaster from which Czechoslovakia has been saved.

In reply to Mr. Churchill that he feared the control of news by the Government, we said it was already here. There are plenty of illustrations of this. There is the news about Palestine being in an actual state of war. That news, although it was known weeks ago was kept back in the press until it could no longer be concealed. The second item is that one of the March of Time's films which started with a citation from Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, and proceeding with the story of China, Abyssinia, Spain, Austria and Czechoslovakia, was forbidden by "the Censor." It appears rather late to expect a censorship. The only question is how far will it be carried. So far as one party is concerned the answer is "To the limit," and the limit is when some of those censored simply defy the censorship and spread whatever news they have.

In discussing Palestine most people forget that it is a country, not of two religions, but of three. There are, as a matter of fact, quite a large native Christian population who far prefer British protection, though they speak Arabic, share Arab culture, and even respond to Arab nationalistic ideas. If Partition occurs, it is estimated that 48,000 will be permanently under the British; 24,000 under the Arabs (not including the 30,000 in Transjordan), 17,000 in the Jewish State, and 21,000 in protected cities. These Christians do not seem to have made much trouble—yet. But they certainly will have something to say later about their "rights." Most of the trouble in Palestine is a religious one, fomented in addition by the economic and cultural superiority of the Jews over the Arabs. Whether all these religions will ever agree, and their followers live happily ever after is difficult too say. Perhaps if there were no religion at all in Palestine, a positive reply would be easier to forecast.

The latest marvel concerning the Royal Family is a large picture in some of the papers with the Duchess of Kent holding a baby, and the lettering underneath, in large type, "Duchess knows how to hold a baby." Such accomplishments on the part of a member of the Royal Family is truly remarkable. And what an example to the mothers of England!

Dr. Inge writes in the *Evening Standard* in an almost charitable strain about the recent Freethought conference. Evidently he is pleased that the Roman Catholic Church (to which he does not belong) was attacked by a number of Delegates. He reserves his criticisms for the straightforward Secularism of some of the speakers. He declaimed against the "vague utilitarianism" of the Secularist, whereas he himself finds his hope in "traditions which really depend on the belief that we are immortal spirits on our probation in a world which is not our final home." This hope, however, has to be studied in the light of Dr. Inge's regret "that my life has been unfortunately prolonged into this wretched time." It would hardly appear to justify his boast that "nothing except the religion of Christ can save the world." The "religion of Christ" has evidently not saved the world in nearly two thousands years of experiment and faith.

There are two organizations which do really cast some reflection on the quality of Christian civilization. One is the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, the other is the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. Last year the first Society rescued 120,000 children from the brutality of their guardians. The figures for the other Society would probably be larger if they were recorded. Now we wonder what such men as Cardinal Hinsley would say if these figures were reported from Russia. And there the proportional populations would be three times as great.

The Rev. Dr. James Reid has been preaching on the subject (the title is his own), of "The Prodigal Father." There seems to be quite a suggestion of God as a sort of divine Neville Chamberlain who gives things away. But the analogy ends when we are told that God's choicest bit of prodigality was to give mankind "freedom." Dr. Reid, of course, is talking about a freedom man has never possessed—what is called "free-will." At a time when Fascism is depriving myriads of human beings of the only form of freedom possible for them to possess, there is something devilish (or religious!) in Dr. Reid's insistence that God gives "freedom" to all mankind, with or without "prodigality."

In the "Answers to Correspondents column" of our Catholic journals, two things seem more and more to worry pious readers. There is the recent Bourne case, and there are dozens of points connected with marriage which apparently are in harmony with common sense, but are not in harmony with Catholic teaching and readers want to know why. The poor editors—or the priestly writers—appear to be very hard put with their replies. One Catholic wants to know, what ought to be done in the case of "an insane syphilitic nigger who commits rape" with a resulting pregnancy? And the answer of the Church is that no matter what are the consequences to child, mother, or society, a child must be brought into the world for the benefit of Roman Catholicism.

It would be a pity to ignore the charming notes interchanged between two great churches during the late (and still unended) crisis over Czechoslovakia. Christianity is always "so bracing." The Rev. James Fraser, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Scotland, sent a telegram to his friend Bishop Heckel:—

In sincere prayer for a peaceful solution and in strong reliance upon our common unity in Christ.

It reminds us of the Christian "unity" which prevailed between German and British churches in 1914.

Suburban snobbery is agitating the mind of the Rev. Herbert Williams, Vicar of St. Alban's Church, Teddington. Apart from householders preferring to give their abodes high-sounding names instead of numbers, "it is also distressing," he says, "to find when people are ill or dying, the priest is not notified. Instead of a priest

administering the last sacrament it is usually the undertaker." (We like that characteristic touch of priestly interest in the dying rather than the living!). A reporter sought the opinions of three other clergymen. Vicar of Holy Trinity, Stepney, the Rev. J. N. Sykes, told him: "The poor cannot afford to be snubbed here. They are all so poor. Yet when somebody has a run of bad luck, he finds many friends to give him a helping hand." Well—both these parsons simply encounter normal social conditions in their respective environments, conventional—posturing and etiquette—rule in Teddington; and natural, though rough, but kindly ways in Stepney.

Canon Morrow, Provost of Chelmsford, finds no snobbery in his church; if there is it is "up to the priest to break it." The rector of St. John's, Westminster—the Rev. E. P. St. John, oddly enough—said that "churches like his are attended by the very rich and the very poor," but "our rich and poor do not meet simply because they live in different directions." Could there be a more absurd excuse than this testimony of St. John? The really amusing aspect of this question is that the parson acts like the devil admonishing himself for his own "sins," for snobbery is pre-eminently a product of clerical teaching, conduct, and behaviour. Whoever drew more sharply the distinction and difference between rich and poor than the parson? Who so ready to cringe the knee before his "betters" while attempting to put his foot on the "lower orders" as the parson? What public-school or varsity man so snobbish in airing the old school tie and college crest, or vaunting his "higher" education, as the parson? He is, in truth, the very last man to speak of snobbery—except as an expert in the art and not a complainant.

At the Church Congress at Bristol, Dr. A. B. I. Karney, Bishop of Southampton, asked what sort of reception would Christ get from the Anglican Church if he returned to us. Apparently no answer was given, so we trust Dr. Karney will permit us to oblige. Should Christ present himself at the palace, rectory, or vicarage without some purpose to the occupant's interest or a proper introduction, he would be spurned as a fellow of "bad form." If he didn't wear gaiters and apron, or just a dog-collar and coat minus lapels, he would be rejected as an authority on his own gospel. Should he suggest practical demonstrations of his teachings, he would be told not to talk damned nonsense. (Oh, yes: clerics use such expressions). If he presumed to claim a ministry, he would be asked his college, degrees, and date of ordination. If he couldn't produce these, together with fancy-dress and coloured or plain hood, he would be denied the right to preach. And, finally, if he proved beyond question that he was Jesus of Nazareth the telephone would be in immediate requisition to advise the nearest police-station that there was a suspicious character—a rogue and vagabond—annoying the speaking cleric, and would they come and arrest him at once. That is the reception Christ would get from a typical cleric "if he returned to us."

Fifty Years Ago

The policeman who tackles armed burglars with no weapon but his staff, the fireman who forges his way through heat and smoke to save women and children, the lifeboat men who row through darkness and storm to rescue the shipwrecked, the unknown thousands whose life is a daily sacrifice for beloved ones, the sufferers who hide their pain to spare relatives and friends, the martyrs of unpopular causes who face odium, obloquy, poverty, imprisonment, and sometimes death for their convictions; these display "the heroism of man," and though they talk very little about "faith" and "sanctification" and the "Eternal," attract no public attention like the heroes of battle-fields, and have no statues in Trafalgar Square, they sweeten in silence and obscurity the life-blood of our race.

The Freethinker, October 21, 1888.

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S. R. GAINES (Boston, U.S.A.)—Thanks for cuttings. We are taking every care so far as health is concerned, but it is worry rather than work that tells most with us.

J. CLAYTON.—Please convey our thanks to your friend.

R. SYERS.—Paper is being sent. We do really hope to meet you for a chat one day, but our days are pretty full.

W. A. BREND.—Thanks for magazine. We are getting steadily better.

V. NEUBURG.—Next week.

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

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

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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

In spite of an unusual number of counter attractions in the shape of a large number of special lectures in Glasgow on Sunday last the McClellan Galleries was crowded to listen to Mr. Cohen's lecture on "The New Science and the New God." The address was evidently greatly enjoyed by all, and there was, we understand, a good sale of literature. The President, Mr. Hamilton, occupied the chair, and made a specially strong appeal for the help of the audience in promoting the sale of the *Freethinker*. Mr. Cohen is for the present not lecturing quite so frequently as usual, but his next visit to the provinces will be to Liverpool on October 30. He will speak in the Picton Hall.

Mr. Jack Lindsay writes concerning the new edition of our *Materialism Re-stated* :—

I had a high opinion of the book in its former state, and I consider it considerably improved. I don't know any book which so broadly and so succinctly covers the issues. I think its chief virtue is in the way in which it clears the ground of all the misconceptions and false assumptions on which anti-materialist argument thrives. I would like to see it included in the textbooks of the university philosophy courses. There would then be considerably less nonsense written in this quite enough encumbered world of ours.

We have repeatedly called attention to the policy of suppression deliberately carried out by the British Press, a policy which is not likely to be decreased in the immediate future. At a huge meeting in the Queen's Hall, on Monday, on behalf of sending food to Government Spain, the Dean of Canterbury stated that he had sent to the *Times* a letter with regard to the question of religious worship in Spain. He pointed out that freedom of worship was allowed all over Republican Spain, and the closing of churches in the area under Republican control was done under ecclesiastical directions in order to give some apparent support to the lies about Religious Persecution by the "Reds." The Dean said that he had himself read authoritative letters in the so-called persecuted Churches saying that services had not to be resumed owing to "other than religious reasons." The *Times* would not publish this, because of the fact that it cut across articles they had been printing in order to produce the "correct" political effect.

The Dean (whose speech, by the way, was a model of wholesome effectiveness) also called attention to the fact that all the representatives of the English press in Spain were united in their profound admiration of the heroic "spirit of man," as shown by the men, women and children of Republican Spain not one of whom would dream of praying for Peace, unless it were a Peace helpful to a reign of justice.

The Dean of Canterbury cannot be serving any selfish purpose by speaking as he does. We are, in fact, willing to wager that he is already marked out for future non-promotion as long as the present Government is in control. We do not suppose he will lose any sleep on this account.

The following, taken from the *New Zealand Truth-seeker*, for September, 1938, will be of interest to our readers :—

On June 18 of this year, "Matanga," writing in the *New Zealand Herald*, spoke as follows: "Robert Blatchford, once so popular with certain antagonists of religion, must be reckoned among ardent advocates for the Bible. . . . he eventually crossed over to a definitely Christian veneration and faith."

We at once took this matter up with the writer "Matanga," but since he stuck to his guns, we wrote direct to Mr. Blatchford. The following letter, received by us on August 22, 1938, speaks for itself :—

The Firs,

Kings Road, Horsham,

July 18, 1938.

Dear Mr. Hayward,—I have not changed my opinion about religion since I wrote *God and My Neighbour*.

In the face of recent scientific discovery, I cannot understand the mentality of those who continue to accept the dogma and creed of any religion, ancient or modern.

The universe has grown too big for the gods men made in their ignorance.

Science now tells us there are millions of island universes, separated by millions of light years, and each of these universes consists of hundreds of thousands of suns.

Can we believe that the God of the Bible created and rules that? We cannot conceive a Creator equal to such a task.

We don't begin to understand the nature, or scope, or purpose of life.

Pious people sometimes ask me do I now believe in God, and when I ask them what they understand by the word "God," they cannot tell me.

Your clergyman hopes that I have turned Christian. I have not, and I don't understand how he remains one.

Yours sincerely,

ROBERT BLATCHFORD.

The reference to the clergyman is to "Matanga," who in private life is a fully qualified clergyman in his own particular denomination. We cannot question the good faith of "Matanga" in writing as he did, but we do ques-

tion the right of any man to attribute affirmation of apostasy to another man without sufficient evidence.

We should like to see with a new edition of Mr. Chase's *Tyranny of Words*, an addendum of words and phrases which, while having a "referent," serve to darken wisdom rather than lead to enlightenment. For instance, the *Observer* for October 9 said that in dealing with the House of Commons' criticisms of Mr. Chamberlain and Hitler, it, "showed how an ultimatum had been supplanted by an 'agreement.'" But as the agreement contained all that was in the ultimatum, one wonders what is the difference between them. It reminds one of the man who said that he had left his last job by the mutual agreement of himself and his employer. He had. The employer told him to go and the employee accepted the order. It was certainly mutual.

There are other phrases that have lately become popular. If one writes that there are many thousands of people in this country suffering from semi-starvation, the phrase is simple, direct, and pulls people up. So the Government officials and most of the papers talk of "malnutrition." In its implications it means semi-starvation, but to the mass of people it suggests some sort of ailment of very little other significance than an epidemic of colds or other inescapable ailments. So, again, we no longer talk of bad trade in official and newspaper jargon. That might suggest that it is probably remediable. We talk now of "trade recession." That does not so sharply indicate probable responsibility somewhere or the other. In other directions there are "rags" for the "hooliganism" of the inmates of public schools or university students, and "hooliganism" for the "rags" of the inmates of elementary and secondary council schools; "loafer" for a man whose every day is one of leisure on a small weekly allowance, a "gentleman of leisure" for one who is a "loafer" from one year's end to another on an income he has done nothing to earn or deserve. One could fill a good-sized book with examples taken from all sorts of directions, and from all kinds of people and subjects. We have often thought of setting about it, but pass it on as a suggestion to others.

The *Jamaica Labour Weekly*, has at least one feature that is unusual in such a paper. It publishes on the back page a "Bible Text for the week," and we are willing to wager that the local clergy are not pleased with it. The weekly dose of the Bible consists of some absurdity or barbarity from the Bible on the lines of our *Bible Handbook*. By the way the last edition of that famous work is selling more rapidly than any other. Perhaps it is because of 1938 being a year of "Recall to Religion."

From the *Edinburgh Evening News* of October 7, we see that by the will of Mr. Johnstone Wright, a charitable Trust has been created for the benefit of gentlewomen of Scottish birth. No religious test is to be applied to those benefitting under the Trust, and, as the Trust is for the benefit of females, no woman is to be among the governors. It is also provided that "no person who is, or has been, a minister of religion shall be eligible as a governor." We hope the Trust will be administered as the testator wishes. But in common fairness it should be borne in mind that laymen may be quite as prejudiced as parsons. The only sure way to stop the play of religious prejudice is to stop the vogue of religion.

If indeed the world in which we live has been produced in accordance with a Plan, we shall have to reckon Nero a saint in comparison with the Author of that Plan. Fortunately, however, the evidence of Divine Purpose is non-existent; so at least one must infer from the fact that no evidence is adduced by those who believe in it. We are, therefore, spared the necessity for that attitude of impotent hatred which every brave and humane man would otherwise be called upon to adopt toward the Almighty Tyrant.—*Bertrand Russell*.

The Magic Word—Christianity

THE Bishop of Chelmsford looks abroad and at home, and is disturbed. He is not the only one. He has a specific but, alas, no one will try it. According to the *News-Chronicle*, he told the Chelmsford Diocesan Conference that one ounce of Christianity would solve Europe's problems. This is his remedy. One little ounce!

Now "Christianity," alas, is but one of those blessed words that defy definition. The fact that everyone you meet feels impelled to tell you what *he* means by Christianity *proves* it to defy definition. The Bishop of Chelmsford will serve up a definition on request; of that there is no manner of doubt. So will one of Jehovah's Witnesses or one of the Muggletonians, the Plymouth Brethren, the Society of Friends, the Swedenborgians, the Countess of Huntingdon's Connexion. They will all tell you what "Christianity" signifies, and that quite glibly, but, alas, it signifies a thousand and one things and a word that does that is full of sound and fury signifying nothing. It has, in modern jargon, no "referent."

It is a pity, for, if this be the case, we can get no forrader. And it would be so delightful to apply such a small dose to the gaping wounds of Europe and thus build up a new Jerusalem. The Bishop is even modest in his claims. He leaves out Asia for instance. Why? Is he so ridiculously and heretically modern that he thinks China could be saved by a pinch of Confucianism, and India by a pinch of Buddhism. One wouldn't be surprised if he did, for life-saving liberalism in the Church of England nowadays draws the line at little. Cardinal Hinsley's Christianity is of another type, and he, as becomes an adherent of the One and Only Truth Faith, has a few elegant names to apply to Chelmsford's liberality. For Cardinal Hinsley's Christianity has a touch of boiling oil in it.

Just an ounce of Chelmsford's brand of Christianity will do the trick! The lion will lie down with the lamb and at the same time the two will preserve their respective corporeal entities. In that warehouse of Christianity labelled BP. CHELMSFORD there are tons of odds and ends labelled THE GOODS. Take an ounce from any part of the building and the world will be saved.

ANY PART OF THE BUILDING? *He that believeth not shall be damned*, for instance. We agree that an ounce of that teaching injected into the masses of mankind has gone, and will go, a long way. It will make mankind vindictive, persecuting, and zealous for the bonfire, the thumbscrew and the rack. Or take an ounce from another corner, John Smith, bricklayer: *Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling. Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear: not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. . . . Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's sake: whether it be the King, as supreme, or unto governors.* And here is an ounce for Mrs. John Smith: *Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands as unto the Lord.* Homoeopathic doses of this stuff will save Europe, says the Bishop of Chelmsford, sez he. It is, curiously enough, substantially the stuff admired by Hitler and Mussolini.

Nay, my brother, I can hear our Bishop saying, be not misled by the *letter*, it is the *spirit* that giveth life. Think of what would be if men were but inoculated ever so slightly with the Christian ethic. Just cast a glance over the—

Yes, yes, yes! We know. *The Sermon on the Mount*. And any ounce of that exhortation is going to do the trick, such as:—

Blessed are the poor in spirit : for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

or

Blessed are the meek : for they shall inherit the earth.

Or take an ounce from the Sermon on the Plain :—

Blessed be ye poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.

or, from elsewhere :—

For the poor ye have with you always.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

or (as the Bishop seems to think the institution of matrimony to-day requires similar Christian sustenance) an ounce from St. Paul :—

It is better to marry than to burn.

Why pick these specific ounces? says our Bishop. Why not?

I expect, however, all the Bishop of Chelmsford means is this, that if men would only cease to be avaricious, domineering, racketeering, and unreasonable, then, things in Europe would be quite different. And Christianity preaches a series of DON'TS on these heads, and if mankind would *only* listen, all would be very beautiful. It is an intellectual outrage to admit as much. Christianity has preached with fervour and preached with much acceptance the afore-mentioned aphorisms, and society bears the mark of such preaching. True, mankind has never accepted as a practical maxim: Take no thought for the morrow; for that plainly meant race-suicide, yet that was one of the contributions of Jesus to the Condition of Europe Question, and in it, strange to say, there was logic, for Christianity (according to Jesus on occasions) was not of this world. It was a method of saving one's soul. In a few years' time there wouldn't be any Europe. Jesus said other things, of course, many of which were contradictory, but that is the Bishop's dilemma, not ours. The Bishop of Chelmsford picks his ounces very carefully. So also do Hitler, Mussolini, and other idealists, who look at the Gospel of Christ and see in it many ounces of fine gold, which they hope to include in their new religion.

God devised Man, and God, according to the Bishop, devised the Christian Religion. He devised this religion of such a form that men hesitate to take even an ounce of it. In short, God has misunderstood and over-estimated his market, just as a firm of boot manufacturers might have done if they had made millions of pairs of shoes to fit the feet of no man. In such cases the only thing left for such a firm to do is to advertise more than ever their wares and insist upon the fact that they fit superbly. If Big Business could get hold of the child when young and unsuspecting, and tell him these are the best lines in shoes going, they would undoubtedly meet with a measure of success. All these things the Church has done, and does, thoroughly and well, as well as cursing melodramatically with bell, book, and candle, any who attempt to use their methods and better their instructions. And now, in spite of all this, we are informed that these clerically drilled and well moulded people won't touch the Christian commodities, not one little ounce. There has been a colossal error of over-production. Bah! An ounce of civet, good apothecary!

The trouble is that people, in the past, have swallowed the stuff too greedily, and the evils to-day in the body politic are aggravated by the overdose. We must think, friends, and work. There is no other way.

T. H. ELSTON.

An Outside Bet

SOME months ago I visited the town of Lisieux in France: a town of some 15,000 inhabitants, famous amongst other things, for the grotto of St. Therese—The Little Flower—one of the favourite saints of the Roman Catholics.

It is interesting to see a whole town given over to superstition; and how it is commercialized. Practically every shop displays pictures, plaques and statues of St. Therese, ranging from 2 inches to 2 feet high: and there are galleries to be visited for a few francs (money is everything), where one can see representations of some of the miracles performed by this young lady.

From the very start of her life, St. Therese was selected for special consideration from the Lord, and was a particular pal of the Virgin Mary; in fact the Virgin appeared to her so many times that she lost count.

It is said that the good die young, and if St. Therese had not followed this rule, there certainly would not be a volume large enough to recall all her miraculous deeds.

On the side of the grotto where the alleged interview with the Lord took place, the Roman Catholics are building a colossal Basilique costing a fabulous sum. It will not be completed for about another year, but is already visited daily by scores of the faithful, as it is built over the already existing chapel of really beautiful marble floors and pillars of rare colouring and exquisite workmanship, dedicated to "The Little Flower."

I entered in company with the devout, and watched with interest the performance of this religious circus.

Several services seemed to be going on at once in different parts of the chapel, but the silence one expects in such a place was absent: there was a continual clatter of feet and banging of doors, and most of the visitors seemed to be rushing like hell from one shrine to another to get in an extra spot of prayer which always took the same form—a genuflexion in front of the shrine, then a flopping down on the knees like a camel with eyes shut tight while lips muttered stupid incantations and fingers were busy with beads: then up like a sprinter off the mark to the next shrine, which instinctively reminded me of a relay race. The whole atmosphere was laden with the smell of heavy incense, there were guttering candles by the hundred and all round the sides of the chapel, little shops where candles could be purchased in sizes and at prices to suit all purses—up to 5s. each. They must afford a fine source of revenue to the greatest fire-insurance system of the world—the Roman Catholic Church—which collects all the premiums for keeping their dupes out of Hell, but never pays any dividends.

By each shrine was a confessional box on which was posted the hours at which the priest attended to receive the confessions of the faithful. No wonder these plausible rogues get to know so much about the inner lives of their victims. We are told that the confessional is sacred, but nothing is kept sacred from the ears of the priest: and so, the flummery and mummery goes on!

Then I went out into the open air; the sun was shining, and how pure and sweet it seemed after being in the chapel. I went into a little restaurant in the town for some coffee, which turned out to be quite the most vile I had ever tasted; but the place boasted a gallery of wax figures, something like a miniature Mme. Tussauds, representing different incidents in the life of St. Therese and the cures of the halt and the lame she had accomplished. Even if, for argument's sake, these cures had been genuine, what a miserable record it

was compared with that of millions of lives saved by such men as Lister, Pasteur and Ronald Ross.

There is a notice on a house in the town of Deal in Kent inscribed on a brass plate to the effect that Lord Lister once lived there; but I have never heard of any Minister of the Church—Roman Catholic or Protestant, leading a pilgrimage to the spot. Nor has any effort that I know of been made to canonize Lister.

In Lisieux every shop has pictures, statuettes and medallions of the Saint—everything is ugly and horrid: it is this religion with its whispering confessionals, its guttering candles and stinking incense and its unhygienic holy water into which hundreds of dirty paws are dipped daily, that, according to men like Chesterton, Belloc & Co., is going to regenerate this world. It is this church which claims to have found the solution for the world's unrest and human misery—was there ever such a farce? I felt glad to know, as I sat in that train which was bearing me on my journey, that every revolution of the wheels was putting a greater distance between me and this town of cant and superstition.

But St. Therese is not finished with yet. I travelled next to Chateaudun to see the famous old ruined chateau. It is a tiny place, but has a monstrous church where are to be found all the usual gadgets—little shrines dedicated to the various saints—Our Lady, Saint Anthony, Saint Swithin, Saint Jude, Saint Simon, Saint Joseph, and Saint Therese again occupying a place of honour, surrounded by scores of brass plaques from grateful worshippers thanking her for favours received, for passing examinations, getting jobs, being cured of sickness, etc.; every one denoting personal selfishness; not a single one concerned with the broad issues of life such as unemployment, for instance.

It reminded me rather of the Arsenal Club Football at a Cup Tie; all the best players in evidence with Saint Therese the favourite.

Saint Joseph had only one plaque—one solitary tipster had backed him and won! I could not help thinking that the whole thing savoured of a Race Course—there were the different entrants for the prayer stakes—St. Therese, the thoroughbred mare with hundreds of victories to her credit; anybody with any sense would back her unquestionably; but along comes a greenhorn, and going up to the bookie (in this case represented by the priest) planks down his money on St. Joseph. It is an outsider's chance, 200 to 1 against his winning. The man's friends try to persuade him that he is wasting his money—that St. Therese is the goods; she cannot fail. Given the bookie can hardly keep his face straight, but he takes the money.

Now they are at the starting post—the signal goes—St. Therese as usual takes the lead; you can recognize her anywhere—her jockey is all in white with a little flower printed on the front and back of his blouse. A long way behind comes St. Joseph's jockey in a blouse of many colours. Only one pair of eyes watches his progress—the apparent nut who has backed him. Old St. Joseph looks fit enough, but he is getting a bit long in the tooth, and rather motheaten about the tail: one can see he has been a good horse, but of course it is a long time now since he registered a real win or stood high in popular favour; in fact his name is hardly ever mentioned in the racing world. Still I suppose it is better to be a good "has been" than a "never was."

But the race is not finished yet—this is going to be a day of surprises. Half-way through St. Joseph has moved up to fourth place and is running strongly—200 yards to go and he has caught up with the favourite—the excitement is intense—thousands are bellowing for St. Therese, and the solitary backer's yell for St. Joseph is drowned in the noise.

St. Joseph draws level with St. Therese—they are running neck and neck—Now, by heavens! St. Joseph has passed—he leads, HE HAS WON.

So we take off our hats to the bloke who put up the brass plate for St. Joseph—another miracle has happened—and faith has been rewarded.

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

Samuel Alexander (d. Sept. 1938)

THE death of Prof. S. Alexander represents a loss, not only to British philosophy, but to the intellectual life of Manchester (which is in any case meagre). As usual, the B.B.C. report made no mention of his definitely heterodox, nay, heretical, leanings. It gave the impression of a kind old man who had written *Space, Time and Deity* for the enlightenment of seekers after truth, giving no indication whatever that Alexander's deity is in every sense a materialistic one, like Shaw's superman, with the same proviso that it has not yet evolved. Alexander even goes further in the contention that a whole horde of "Gods" may yet appear, for "deity" is the next thing that the universe will produce after producing mind.

The material beings which will one day come to possess deity are Alexander's future gods. "That the world is pregnant with such a quality," he says, "we are speculatively assured." He confesses ignorance as to the nature of "deity," except that it is higher than mind. It is "a speculative possibility to which we give shape in anticipation." It is to be nothing supernatural; "God's deity is lodged in a portion of his body."

It seems to me that, in saner language, the Alexander deity implies nothing more than that the behaviour we now call mind is not the most complex type of behaviour with which matter and space are pregnant. This is not too wild an assumption, for it is now known that the old fashioned "five senses" must give way, in up-to-date physiology, to over twice as many "receptor-elements" (e.g., the labyrinthine and the proprioceptors).

Needless to say, Alexander's plurality of possible future gods does not satisfy religious requirements. Following Alexander's Gifford Lectures of 1914-16, a subsequent Gifford lecturer (Webb, 1918) remarked that the "religious consciousness demands, not a prospective God, but an actual one."

Space, Time and Deity, to which a paper read to the British Academy in 1914 is a brief forerunner, represents his sole contribution to philosophy for the purpose of classifying him, though there are other critical works like *Spinoza and Time* (1921), in which he quotes Heine's opinion that all subsequent philosophies have seen through glasses which Spinoza ground (a reference to Spinoza's trade as well as his philosophy), and a study of *Locke*.

Alexander's system, which has been classed as emergent materialism, arises from twentieth century work by physics on space and time. Space-time, for Alexander, goes deeper than matter. It is basic to all being, the matrix out of which all existents are made. It breaks into complexes, giving, in chronological order, 1 Motion, 2 Matter, 3 Mind, and 4 Deity (in prospect).

Now there are two ways of looking at space-time. One is, to regard it conceptually, as a manufactured mental picture to aid thought and action. This was Kant's way. The other is, to regard it as something which antedates mind and exists independently of it, as though we were to say, "A huge chunk of something has appealed to mind; let it be known as space-

time." This is Alexander's way. He gives space-time the following rich properties: existence, relation, universality, order, substance, causality, reciprocity, quantity, intensity, motion. Thus primarily armed, its products are graded through matter, life and mind to Deity—created, not creative.

With regard to an after life, he holds that "our desires cannot overrate the facts of our apparent limitation to the time and place of our bodily life." The date, he adds, do not permit us to assume survival. Mind is forever tied to matter, as matter is tied to space.

It is fair to Alexander to note that later research in physics has strengthened the view that space, far from being a mere mental conception of extension, has been endowed with rich properties that the best human engineer could never abolish in making a vacuum. There is no such thing as a complete vacuum, no such "extension of nothingness." The acceptance of Jeans' "Concertina Universe," as against the "Toppling," "Explosive Creation," and other theories, means that we regard space as being filled with a "cosmic cloud," whose elasticity might account for a universe expanding and (some day) contracting.

Alexander wrote extensively, too, on "Values," which he saw as belonging to "the union of the object with the mind." He contended that natural selection was the process by which values were established, and his exposition of this abstruse subject elicited great admiration for his literary style. Though hardly comparing with Santayana, his written words show a nice handling of metaphor, but the dullest lecture I ever listened to came from his lips. His subject was "Beauty, Truth and Goodness": whether he was full of his subject was hard to say, for he discoursed so long on the first that he had no time to talk about the others, and what promised to be an ode turned out to be a sonnet. Replete with ear-trumpet and long beard, he represented the popular showman's idea of a professor, even to the extent of reading a page in the wrong order, which, on this occasion, I suspected and feared, happened on a wholesale scale. My chief impression of his address was of a row of young ladies using him for the purpose of practising their shorthand.

G. H. TAYLOR.

Correspondence

AN INTERNATIONAL LANGUAGE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—Mr. Bayard Simmons may not have studied this problem quite so deeply as his erudition and versatility show him to have studied quite a number of other subjects. Before making the statement, "English has now definitely established itself, etc.," it might have been as well to consult some non-English speakers. They would rapidly adjust Mr. Bayard Simmons's view. Being a member of a Polyglot Club, I am competent to speak as to that. I hold the diplomas in two modern formations resulting from the intensive (but little known and less understood) studies and labours of eminent linguists and philologists of the last fifty years, and I must have studied some eight or ten international language projects during my life. One thing I gather from my long devotion to the problem, namely, that *no one of them has yet attained finality*. Which is the best up to date is not the question Mr. Bayard Simmons and Miss Violet I. Mitchell have raised. English, which has irregular verbs, arbitrary spelling and pronunciation, several forms for the verb in one tense and mood, many ways of making feminines and sometimes a totally different word for masculine and corresponding feminine, many ways of forming plurals and a host of other complications, can never become an international medium. Esperanto, which has a declension and

agreeing adjective (both absent in English) an arbitrary verb conjugation, relative pronouns, conjunctions and other words of frequent use not related to existing languages and other technical defects, though, of course, much nearer to the goal than English, is, still, far removed from possibility of general acceptance as its meagre following after half a century of propaganda shows. No natural language, however, can be conceived of as capable of filling the bill because all natural languages have more than one verb conjugation. Yet mankind *must* devise an international medium if civilization is to be saved.

ROBERT HARDING.

SIR,—The brief answer to Miss Violet Mitchell's letter is neither in Esperanto nor English, but in racy American—"You're telling me!"

Let me inform Fraulino Mitchell *en mia kara lingvo ke mi estis ano de la Londona Esperantista klubo antaŭe pli ol tridek jaroj*, or, in the most widely spoken tongue, English, that I was a member of the London Esperantist Club more than 30 years ago. Let me also tell *mia samideanino* that two years ago at the Prague International Freethought Conference, when a Polish comrade and I found ourselves stuck, he having only Polish and German, and I only English, French and Russian, we fell back on Dr. Zamenhof's *helpa lingvo* and really were helped.

But I must not allow my critic to impute more to my words than they convey. The second most widely-spoken European tongue, Russian, being, quite wisely, admitted at Prague, it seemed to me only fair and sensible that the most widely-spoken language should be as well. There was no thought in my mind, nor suggestion in my article, that Volapuk, Esperanto, Ido, Basic English, or Double Dutch should not also be official languages if desired. On reflection, I feel sure Miss Mitchell will feel that the charge of insularity does not lie against

RAYARD SIMMONS.

"LADIES OF LIBERTY"

SIR,—"Mimnermus," in a recent article, refers to Annie Besant's farewell address at the old Hall of Science. I was there on that occasion. Allowing for the emotional circumstances, it still remains with me the most outstanding platform performance I ever witnessed, for sheer beautiful oratory Annie Besant, in my opinion, was never equalled let alone surpassed.

I wonder how many there are living, that were present on that occasion.

"In "Our Ladies of Liberty," I miss the name of "Mary Sowden," a capable educational worker, "Babylonia and the Hebrew Bible," and such important subjects being her special theme. The files of the *National Reformer* would give much information regarding this lady.

Apart from her useful public work Miss Vance was indeed a "Delightful companion." On one occasion Mr. Foote organized an excursion to Epping Forest, starting from the Hall of Science, numerically it was a great success; but the weather conditions turned out very bad. At High Beech, Miss Vance with her "charming" social gifts absolutely saved the situation. At that gathering, one of the speakers was an ex-clergyman in whom I felt considerable interest, and have often wondered about his subsequent career—of which I know nothing.

I first heard Mrs. Thornton Smith at Milton Hall, she deputized for Mrs. Besant; the chairman announced that any who were disappointed could have repayment if they wished to leave. Not one left the hall. She took for her subject, "The Lord's Prayer," and on her conclusion received quite an ovation.

In those far off days it was hard for men, yet much harder for women, to be associated with the Freethought movement.

Apart from the platform, there was Mary Read, her subjects being the "Arts." I am sure her articles in the *Reformer*—"Puritanism and Art," etc., would if reprinted find many appreciative readers; for they supplied real information. I remember that years ago I managed to get many lengthy letters into the *Echo*; there was quite an avalanche of discussion, in which the Rev. Woffendale "The Light of the World," with other notorious defenders of the faith, took part. I mention it for the reason that it

brought me into contact with the late Mr. Gould, with whom, at the time, I had delightful correspondence. Incidentally this discussion was the subject of a sermon by the Rev. Voysey, Theistic Church, Piccadilly.

Compare the press of to-day with the open-mindedness of the *Echo* and *Chronicle*, also *Weekly Dispatch* of fifty and more years ago.

Of Mr. Bradlaugh I could say much. Apart from his mighty ability he inspired love or hate; with me it was and is the former.

For Mr. Foote I have great admiration, more as a writer of fine English; his conference paper on "Meredith" (or was it article?) I considered simply masterly. From the platform point of view I considered him an elocutionist rather than an orator, it's a matter of opinion.

Charles Watts, a genius of the first order, was one of Freethought's greatest giants. Of Tousseau Parris G. Standing, A. Moss, W. Heaford, C. J. Hunt, M. Miller, Toleman Garner, and many others, recollections occur to me, but I have written enough. Surely, Sir, these memories should be kept green.

Finally I was in at the commencement of Chapman Cohen's career; the first time he swam into my ken was in Hyde Park! His dignified ability gave that promise that has been justified by his subsequent career, a worthy successor of those pioneers of the best of causes.

CHARLES BAXTER.

GOD AND THE SPARROW

"Not a sparrow shall fall to the ground but the Heavenly Father knoweth."

SIR,—Late last Spring my son and I discovered a bird's nest which was almost caked solid by excrement, in which was a young bird securely tethered by one claw and dead.

I brought it away intact, and submitted it to our local Recorder of Ornithology (an F.Z.S.) whose report reads as follows:—

"The nest is that of a Greenfinch; the bird is a fully-fledged and practically full-grown Greenfinch. It has evidently been fast by its leg practically all its life, and has filled the nest with its droppings. Doubtless it has been fed by the parent birds during that time."

Now, if I, with only my human love and sympathy, had known of the plight and distress of this poor bird and its parents, I would willingly and anxiously have hurried over the ten intervening miles, necessary to give it freedom and life. Can I or anyone else regard the scriptural text quoted as other than sheer nonsense and humbug?

A. E. PECK.

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD OCTOBER 13, 1938

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

Also present: Messrs. Clifton, Hornibrook, Rosetti (A. C.), Elstob, Bryant, Preece, Seibert, Ebury, Silvester, Bedborough, Horowitz, Griffiths, Mrs. Quinton, and the Secretary.

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented.

New members were admitted to Birkenhead, Liverpool, Kingston, West London, Bethnal Green Branches and the Parent Society.

Correspondence was dealt with from Edinburgh, Blackburn, Chester-le-Street, South London, and instructions given.

Messrs. Bedborough, Elstob, Horowitz and the General Secretary were elected to attend a Conference on the Official Secrets Acts and the Freedom of the Press.

The sub-committee appointed under Motion 16 remitted from the Annual Conference presented a report, which was discussed at some length and adjourned.

The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for Thursday, November 17, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary.

Obituary

H. BELL

ON October 17, Mr. James Paulden read a Secular funeral service over the body of Harry Bell, 64 years old, of Bolton, Lancs. Mr. Bell, for thirty years an instructor of the children of Bolton (for the Education Committee) in the art of swimming, had been for a like period an active Secularist and a good speaker for Freethought and other Reform movements. He had a very happy way with him, and at social gatherings was an invaluable figure. He will be greatly missed by a large circle of Boltonians.

J. CORNETT

It is with regret that I have to report the death of Mr. "Joe" Cornett, of Liverpool. Probably not well known to the present generation of local Freethinkers, but a stalwart of years ago, ever ready to play the part of propagandist, he never disguised his Freethought opinions and principles. As he specially requested, a Secular Service was read by Mr. W. McKelvie, on October 12, at the Kirkdale Cemetery.—W. McK.

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

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Mr. F. W. Adams (National Council for Civil Liberties)—"Civil Liberties."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, W. B. Curry, M.A., B.Sc.—"The Problem of Freewill."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Allan Flanders—"Freethought and Politics To-day."

OUTDOOR

KINGSTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

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

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Mrs. N. Buxton, Miss Millard, Messrs. Bryant, Baines, Collins and Tuson.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BERKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whelstone Lane): 7.0, G. H. Taylor (Stockport)—"Some Christian Arguments Examined."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 7.0, Mr. A. Copeland—"Christ the Teacher."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Mr. Frank Smithies (Edinburgh N.S.S.)—"Through Science to Philosophy."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. Reginald Bishop—"Russia To-day."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, Walter Atkinson (Manchester)—"Materialism."

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (King's Café, 64-66 Oxford Road, Manchester, near All Saints Church): 7.0, Mr. F. Spencer (Manchester)—"Economics and Social Liberty."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.0, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

SECULARISM affirms that this life is the only one of which we have any knowledge, and that human effort should be wholly directed towards its improvement: it asserts that supernaturalism is based upon ignorance, and assails it as the historic enemy of progress.

Secularism affirms that progress is only possible on the basis of equal freedom of speech and publication; it affirms that liberty belongs of right to all, and that the free criticism of institutions and ideas is essential to a civilized State.

Secularism affirms that morality is social in origin and application, and aims at promoting the happiness and well-being of mankind.

Secularism demands the complete secularization of the State, and the abolition of all privileges granted to religious organizations it seeks to spread education, to promote the fraternity of peoples as a means of advancing international peace, to further common cultural interests, and to develop the freedom and dignity of man.

The Funds of the National Secular Society are legally secured by Trust Deed. The Trustees are the President, Treasurer and Secretary of the Society, with two others appointed by the Executive. There is thus the fullest possible guarantee for the proper expenditure of whatever funds the Society has at its disposal.

The following is a quite sufficient form for anyone who desires to benefit the Society by legacy:—

I hereby give and bequeath (*Here insert particulars of legacy*), free of all death duties, to the Trustees of the National Secular Society for all or any of the purposes of the Trust Deed of the said Society.

The National Secular Society was founded in 1865 by Charles Bradlaugh. He remained its President until shortly before his death, and the N.S.S. has never ceased to live up to the tradition of "Thorough" which Bradlaugh by his life so brilliantly exemplified.

The N.S.S. is the only organization of militant Freethinkers in this country. It aims to bring into one body all those who believe the religions of the world to be based on error, and to be a source of injury to the best interests of Society. It claims that all political laws and moral rules should be based upon purely secular considerations. It is without sectarian aims or party affiliations.

If you appreciate the work that Bradlaugh did, if you admire the ideals for which he lived and fought, it is not enough merely to admire. The need for action and combined effort is as great to-day as ever. You can best help by filling up the attached form and joining the Society founded by Bradlaugh.

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Any person is eligible as a member on signing the following declaration:—

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Name

Address

Occupation

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