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

Views and Opinions

The Power of Social Coercion

DURING the war of 1914-18 I wrote an article on the "Moral Equivalent for War." The article attracted considerable attention, and it was reprinted by a reader in the West of England, and, I believe, widely, although privately, circulated. It was a time when the clergy and others were doing "their bit" by glorifying the moral qualities of war. Our own soldiers were all heroes, the army gave man the discipline he needed, it was the breeding ground of courage, it developed a sense of duty, it taught men comradeship, and every nation owed its finest qualities to war. My article took as its theme the admission that all these things might accompany war, for a time, but, as stated, it was a huge lie, and in its probable consequences a criminal lie. It is, of course, conceivable that war might, in certain circumstances, be the lesser of two evils. Free intercourse between people is in normal circumstances an important thing, but in the presence of an epidemic, isolation and a restriction of movement may be vitally necessary.

But comradeship, a socialized expression of the gregarious instinct, discipline, a normal expression of the pressure of the group, a sense of duty, an intellectualized expression of social consciousness, courage, comradeship, etc., all these are developments of social life and are exploited by militarism wherever it exists. They are wasted, not developed, by war. Keep men at war long enough and the sense of duty weakens, courage turns into cowardice, comradeship yields to self-preservation. An army in the field that is not constantly recruited from social spheres steadily deteriorates. The truth is the human virtues are developed in peace and exploited and weakened in war. And directly after the war, after four years of this disciplining of character and conduct, the constant defence in criminal courts was that one could not expect men who had been taught to hold life cheaply for four strenuous years to have a very great regard for it when they returned to civil life. To-day we have a

larger general perception of the futility and brutality of war, but that is because the danger of modern war has been brought home to many. And fear is not really a very hopeful foundation on which to build a real peace. Had there been no bombing planes threatening London there is little doubt but that Britain would have been at war several weeks ago.

* * *

War and Peace

I think as a supplement to the "Moral Equivalent for War," I might now attempt an expansion of what was said some twenty-two years ago. The war that began in 1914 is still in being, all we have had is a partial armistice in which casualties, reckoned in terms of the higher values, have been as numerous as those of the "Great War." It is only three weeks since our Prime Minister visited Hitler, received a number of demands, a threat and a couple of ultimatums, and by a compromise that gave Hitler a little more than he had asked for, came home bringing Europe peace. The peace was ushered in by an outburst of hysteria such as I had never expected to see on any occasion, and which should furnish illuminating material to sociologists.

But the first stages of the "peace" is to be a rapid, almost a frenzied, increase in arms, in the air, on land and on the sea, also an increase in man power devoted to war. We are frightened at war so we adopt plans which—unless all history is wrong—must end in war. We now avow an hatred of war—so we are to fill the minds of the rising generation that to get ready for war is the surest form of a sound social development. We are even to be conscripted socially at once, and in a military sense, later. I am not arguing whether these two forms of conscription are justified or not. I am merely noting the situation—for which I shall probably get abuse from both sides. But we all ought to have enough common-sense left in our heads to realize that "Compulsory Social Service" (as though the best social service can ever be given under the baton of the policeman) is only part of the psychological preparation for war. The people are asked to submit to it because they are led to believe that war in the near future is probable; they will become used to blindly obeying orders from above in the workshop, and there must be, of course, penalties for disobedience. Compulsory social service must discourage questioning and criticism. The workman is a soldier in the workshop, who like the workman in the Army must neither question nor criticize those above him. The "good" citizen becomes one who obeys orders. That is rapidly becoming the rule over a large part of the world, and who are we that we should aim at enjoying greater freedom or a greater degree of manliness than other people?

* * *

Who are We Arming Against?

Now these preparations for war can be directed

against one people, or to protect ourselves from *one* people. We are not afraid of war with Italy, with France or with Russia. We are not frightened of Turkey, or Timbuctoo or Monaco. It is to protect ourselves against Germany and Germany alone that we are arming at a terrific rate. The polite lies of our Government that we are not arming with eyes solely on Germany deceives no one except those people who love humbug and hypocrisy even when there is no need for it. Perhaps it is done to keep them in practice. But Germany says she does not want war. Among the mountain of lies told by German leaders we can accept that as a truth. Only it must be said that no country ever wants war if it can get what it wants without it. No thief was ever anxious to "sandbag" a pedestrian if he could get his valuables by just asking for them. Even the old highwayman did not *want* to shoot anyone. He was merely asking for the wherewithal to live. To say, then, that we have not Germany in mind when we talk about the need for being prepared for war is a piece of humbug or hypocrisy that deceives no one—at least it ought not to do so.

But in the case of Germany we have not a nation with whom normal relations can be or ought to be maintained. In the old days the nations of Europe subscribed to a common code of honour, and were very much upon a level with regard to their moral and ethical rules. The difference of political institutions did not enter because, while different forms of Government existed, the Government of each country observed certain rules that were usually understood, and were generally applied. None of these things prevented friendly association with great differences of internal life.

But the Germany of to-day presents us with quite another problem. It is not a difference of political institutions. It is not fundamentally a question of Democracy *versus* Dictatorship. It is not a question of rivalry in the rush to acquire more territory. These things have always been with us. The present issue is essentially the maintenance of friendly relations (political relations must always exist in any circumstances) between ourselves and a Government, which for sheer calculated brutality and bestial obscenity, for professed dishonesty in speech and practice, is without precedent in the history of the world. It proclaims itself the superior people of the world, and refuses to admit that the rest of the world has any moral claims on it. Intermarriage is forbidden, not the slightest degree of freedom of thought, speech or publication is permitted. The German people are kept in a condition of childlike ignorance by being forbidden to read literature of other countries should they feel so inclined. Women are treated as little better than cattle; their only part in life is to breed children. People are robbed, children of the alleged inferior race are starved, materially and spiritually. Hundreds of thousands are sent to concentration camps to be beaten or tortured to death. Even the British papers dare not print full records of what is in being in Germany. To call the Government of Germany a civilized Government is an abuse of language. It is an apotheosis of all that is vile in human nature. There is really no point at which a civilized Government, or a civilized people, can come into close fraternal contact with Germany.

* * *

Why Not?

Now I am not for a moment suggesting that we ought to break off diplomatic relations with such a Government. But there is surely another way of expressing our disgust with what is going on in Germany, and to let our evident disapproval with it do its work among the German people. All that has been done up to the present is to arrange for friendly

parties to go to Germany for competition games—some of which had to be given up because they were converted into instruments of political propaganda; tourist parties, who thought of nothing but saving a few pounds on their summer holiday, money which was converted into aeroplanes to bomb London, if necessary, and bodies of Ex-Service men (one of which has recently declined to go), and none of which ever took the trouble to acquaint Germans with the disgust existing in this country over the general persecution of liberal scientists and thinkers, the suppression of freedom of thought and speech, and so forth. Mr. Chamberlain says he was surprised the German *people* did not want war, and at the warmth of feeling expressed for this country. The poor innocent! Had he no knowledge of what was going on, and no knowledge of the way in which the people were trained to cheer to order, to be silent to order, and how carefully English news has been kept from them?

What is it, then, that I suggest? Well it is something very simple indeed. If I have a neighbour who is a drunkard, who ill-treats his wife, beats his children, uses coarse and abusive language, and if his manners are worse than coarse, and if there is even a strong suspicion that he is a thief, how do I behave? I feel bound, even justified, in giving him all the normal social amenities. I will respect his right to his personal belongings as I wish he would respect mine. I will not take from him the right to travel in the same train as myself, or even to sit in the same carriage. I will respect his right of way in the public street, his right to send his children to the Council school, and for them to be treated in every way as are my children. But I will not meet him on terms of professed friendship, I will not profess respect for him (which would be only another way of saying that I have no respect left for myself), and I will act thus because, while I do not filch from him his rights as a citizen, I do abhor his conduct as a man. This treatment may not reform him, but it is at least likely to awaken a sense in him that all is not as it should be.

Now is there any sufficient reason why this treatment should not be adopted with Germany. Our diplomatic relations must, of course, be retained, but everything that indicates approval, or even a passive approval, with what the German Government is doing should be avoided. I think this obtains with the best men and women of this country. Remember that it is Germany by its own conduct that has deliberately rejected the validity of those phases of life which we in this country hold to be vital to human welfare. Why should we continue to deal with the German Government as though we were unaware that this development of a brutal bestiality hitherto unknown to the world has taken place? Might not even our bargain-hunting tourists in Germany sometimes think of the groans of the men and women and children in concentration camps that act as undertones to the songs they are listening to in the Bierhouse? Why not treat Germany as we treat our undesirable neighbours, instead of professing our belief that truth, honour, or justice, respect for learning or for infancy or age, have any place in the minds of the rulers of Germany?

Of course, it may be urged that the German people are misled by Hitler and his gang. I agree that this is so. But are we not assisting this deception, when we profess respect for the German Government, a Government that commenced its career by burning down its own House of Parliament in order to obtain the excuse for executing some of its opponents? Are we not helping to keep the German people in ignorance when we behave as we do? The German *people* have no ill-will against England or any other country, but at present they are not permitted to know how other countries feel about *them*. Even the wireless is closed to Ger-

mans, for Germans may not listen-in to foreign stations. We cannot enlighten Germans how this country feels through the medium of our papers. They are forbidden to read them. No Englishman may present English views to Germans—unless he is in the pay of the Nazis. There is only one way in which we can, with self-respect mark our attitude. We can make our sentiments with regard to what is going on in Germany by words when possible, and by our conduct all the time. We might make Germany realize that until it enters the circle of civilized peoples we can have no friendly relations with her. It has been urged that by encouraging parties of British people to visit Germany we are making for better relations. In the case of many nations that is true. In the case of Germany it is not true. British visitors to Germany seldom discuss the relative institutions of the two countries. Natives dare not say anything in criticism of their own position or real feelings. It is too dangerous a subject. The only way left is to make the German people realize what position they really hold in the minds of civilized men and women. Assault by force, or by vilification, a people may stand. But the assault by silent disapproval, by social ostracism, will make itself felt where other means fail.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

The Napoleon of Freethought

"The great Achilles whom we knew."—Tennyson.

"Clericalism, there is the enemy."—Gambetta.

THAT a private soldier in Victorian days should nurse the ambition of being, some day, the first President of a British Republic is extraordinary. And, Charles Bradlaugh, who dreamed that dream, was an extraordinary man. He never achieved this ambition, but he wrote his name deep in his country's history, and he did more for Freethought than any other man of his generation.

What manner of man was he? Over six feet in height, with a leonine head, and a winning personality, aroused attention everywhere. In addition, he was the foremost orator in this country. His only serious rival was Col. Robert Ingersoll, who never spoke publicly in England, but whose lectures were as familiar as household words to Victorian Intellectuals.

Bradlaugh's gifts as an orator were phenomenal. He could address a hostile House of Commons and command its respect. He could debate with H. M. Hyndman, a truly formidable antagonist, and hold an audience of five thousand people in the great St. James's Hall, Piccadilly. A familiar figure in the Law Courts, he could bill and coo his way to legal victory with the easy assurance of a popular King's Counsel. At one time he could denounce Priestcraft with all the indignation of Gladstone speaking on Turkish atrocities; at another he was as soothing as Ward Beecher addressing a congregation. There were giants in those days, but Bradlaugh was head and shoulders above most of them.

Such a personality did he possess, that those of us who were then young (alas! a dwindling minority to-day), regarded him as the Napoleon of Freethought. He led us to victory against a world in arms. Prior to his leadership, Freethinkers were unorganized, and fitfully led. When he laid down his sword, we were a compact army with banners, commanding respect from our formidable opponents. As Napoleon had his marshals, Bradlaugh had his lieutenants. To think of them is to have an accession of pride. G. W. Foote, Charles Watts, J. M. Robertson, and Annie Besant, formed a galaxy of talent which would have added

lustre to any movement. Even the lesser lights of Freethought were men of ability, such as Arthur B. Moss, George and Sam Standing, Robert Forder, and others too numerous to mention. The lecturers, some fifty in number, rendered devoted service, and carried the message of Freethought throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles. Even the sub-editor of the *National Reformer*, Bradlaugh's own paper, was no less a person than James Thomson, the poet who gave us *The City of Dreadful Night*. Truly, Secularism at that period was represented by a very brilliant group of "Intellectuals."

What a price Bradlaugh paid for his leadership! The very last time I heard him lecture at the old Hall of Science, Old Street, London, was on the occasion of the presentation of a testimonial to Robert Forder, for years the Secretary of the National Secular Society. Bradlaugh was then a broken man. For a whole generation he had led the forces of Freethought, but the Barbarians were too much for even his iron constitution. Brave to the very last, he kept a bold front to the enemy, but he was bleeding to death beneath his armour. Some of his cheering audience nearly broke down, thinking of the fierce, old fighting days and nights, when there was no thought of anything but the fight itself, and the chance of victory. And there was our hero wounded to the death. The audience dispersed with a sense of impending gloom.

Not long afterwards, Bradlaugh was dead. Then all the unclean things of Orthodoxy crawled from their hiding places and assailed his memory. There was, however, one very notable exception. The House of Commons, hearing that he was on his death-bed, passed a resolution erasing the record of his expulsion. It was a noble gesture, worthy of the Mother of Parliaments. But the members knew Bradlaugh, and had learned to admire this Tribune of the People. Had his ecclesiastical opponents known Bradlaugh as he really was, they could scarcely have hated him as they did. Intoxicated with the verbosity of their pumped-up indignation, they have behaved, not as men, but as baboons. For over eighty years, Christians have libelled and lied about Bradlaugh in the name of a "Religion of Love," and near half a century after his death, hooligans desecrate his grave. It is horrible, but when one recalls that the same pious malice pursued Thomas Paine, Voltaire, and many others, it is abundantly clear that superstition narrows the vision and blunts the edge of principle.

Bradlaugh's motto was "Thorough," and throughout his life he acted up to it. Every issue of his paper, the *National Reformer*, boldly proclaimed his Atheism and Republicanism. He was no dreamer, leaving others to translate his ideas into deeds. First and last, he was a man of action. Without his leadership, the Freethought Movement might have been delayed in the desert for many years. It was he, most ably seconded by men and women of real talent, doubtless, but, again, first and foremost, he who made the Freethought Party as we know it to-day, a tower of sanity in a mad world.

It is strange that people are only now beginning to see that Bradlaugh's attitude to religion was actually forced upon him. He had no wish to fight the thousands of clerical charlatans and their hundreds of thousands of half-educated satellites. He did not want to waste his time arraigning the barbarities and absurdities of the Christian Bible, or the mischievous activities of Priestcraft. But he soon realized that the clergy were the bulwark of tyranny, and that their vested interest stereotyped reaction in its worst forms. It was precisely because the Christian religion was the shield of injustice that he challenged it; and if he seemed to those outside his influence a mere icono-

clast, he has in this only shared the fate of the world's greatest reformer.

Bradlaugh fought for liberty for man, woman, and child; and his life-struggle was as heroic as that of the Spartan heroes who held the pass against the Persian hosts. He stood like the rock of Gibraltar against the hordes of Priestcraft. Bradlaugh grows larger to one's mental and moral vision the more distant he becomes. The best views of the Alps are to be gained from a distance, and we get the better view of Bradlaugh as we recede from him. A hero himself in action, he was chivalry incarnate. He was never the man to shout to others, "Go on," but he always said, "Come on." Now that he is no longer a presence, but a memory, we are free to look at him, free from controversy, and able to estimate him at his true worth. Shall our own lives not be nobler also because of his worthy example? He fell, prematurely worn out by hard work and harder usage, in that great battlefield of humanity, whose soldiers fight not to shed blood, but to dry up tears; not to murder their fellow-men, but to raise them up. Labouring not for himself, but for others, he made an imperishable name, and gave the world "assurance of a man." Let us salute the memory of one of the bravest and truest that ever drew breath:—

"Our glorious century gone
Beheld no head that shone
More clear across the storm, above the foam,
More steadfast in the fight
Of warring night and light,
True to the truth whose star leads heroes home."

MIMNERMUS.

"Materialism Re-stated"

It is a pleasant change to turn from the dryas dust philosophers to the genial atmosphere wherein Chapman Cohen dwells when he is bent only on the art of teaching. As a propagandist, Mr. Cohen wields the battleaxe of destruction against the onslaughts of superstition. As a teacher he is persuasive and convincing.

On numerous platforms I have quoted from my well-thumbed and underlined copy of the 1927 edition of *Materialism Re-stated*. I made my own clumsy but useful "Index" to the book which I have supplanted on my modest shelf with a handsome volume called "Second Edition." It is a hundred pages longer (and as much better) than the original. It is admirably bound. But in no sense does it turn its back upon its predecessor. Its additions are not subtractions as many "revised editions" are. One may say that this new edition actually simplifies the old—a rare accomplishment. These additions include in particular the author's valuable exposition of "Emergence"—a word which has become fashionable amongst some who understand it, and more who use it as a missile against Materialism.

Mr. Cohen has elsewhere explained the genuine place of "Agnosticism." Here he shows clearly how and when "Emergence" can be truthfully and usefully used. In this case he answers the Theistic claims and re-assures hesitant Freethinkers by demonstrating most effectually the place of "Emergence" as one of the aspects of Evolution. He argues as the scientist must argue. He does not argue as the Theistic believer in some sort of "Evolutionary theory," who regards "Science" as an under-housemaid in the House of God. This chapter will, we think, be read and re-read. It is lucid, it is convincing, but it is also necessary. The fact is that "Emergence" has

become as glibly used and as little understood as Freud's categories and complexes.

Bertrand Russell once said that "matter has lost its old solidity, and mind its old spirituality." It is therefore high time that a writer as capable as Mr. Cohen should attempt the re-definition of some important words. We could all quote dozens of words which have lost their ancient significance. In most cases, of course, the words themselves are unimportant, that is to say the lexicographers have no prejudices in giving such words their current signification. They are words which tempt nobody into a display of political, ethical or religious bias.

Where old prejudices linger behind words which have evolved new meanings, the dictionaries do their best to confuse their readers. Definitions can lie and mislead. Readers of Allan Upward's *The New Word* (highly praised by Stuart Chase in *The Tyranny of Words*) will remember with delight the amazing paper-chase the author had amongst dictionaries—all of which evaded or misrepresented the interpretation of the word "ideal." Mr. Upward's book might be called *Idealism Re-stated*. And in *Materialism Re-stated*, Mr. Cohen has had to ignore dictionaries—scientific, religious, and even rationalistic—because Materialism means something more, and often something different, when the student seeks in vain to find accurate defining in all the books of reference.

The ancient uses of the words, Materialism, Atheism, Freethought have never been flattering. Authorities have regarded these words as connoting every evil human quality. Materialism, perhaps more than any other word has been an accusing term of reproach, suggesting crimes of which mere murder was almost venial. Later on, in the impotence of emphasis, pious theists added adjectives such as "crass," "vile," and "base" to the noun "materialism"—a sign that Materialism was gaining ground. The world is still taught by lying epithets that all the good qualities are "spiritual," and all the evil things are "earthly, carnal, devilish"—i.e., materialistic.

Materialism Re-stated shows that this word has been maligned by its enemies and often misunderstood by its friends. Take the first good dictionary and look up this word. Annandale's *Concise Dictionary* tells you that Materialism is "that which is neither spiritual nor mental." The Oxford Dictionary says it is something "concerned with externals only."

The Encyclopædists have been equally misleading. The *Encyclopædia Britannica* says "Naïve Materialism" [the sort we secularists accept], is due to ignorance and "in anti-religious materialism the motive is hostility to . . . certain forms of spiritual doctrine." It is amusing to read in the same article that there is also a "Scientific Materialism"—"meaning the doctrine commonly adopted by the physicist, zoologist and biologist." Other scientists apparently do not accept "scientific materialism"! And even "contemporary science is tending away from Materialism towards the recognition of other than mechanical factors in even the physical phenomena of Nature." The Religious Tract Society could scarcely outdo this ineffable impudence.

Materialism Re-stated traces the history of Materialism, as well as defining it anew, correcting inadequate and inaccurate statements of its scope, answering criticisms, and probing deeply into the problem of personality. Instead of the unscientific and ignorant antithesis between "Mind" and "Matter," Materialism is shown here to cover the whole of existence. The laws of Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Psychology are branches of materialist science. Beliefs in Religion and all other superstitions have a real materialistic basis—mostly in human ignorance, fear and cupidity. In this sense Materialism, as re-stated

by Mr. Cohen, embraces Religion as well as atoms, electrons and the particles of floating dirt, which are called sunbeams.

In a very serious book, Mr. Cohen has shown a sense of humour and a brilliant wit* subordinate to his great subject, but welcome because it is neither strained nor irrelevant. Remembering Mrs. Annie Besant's critical attack on the limited scope of the Materialism she left behind when she resigned from the Secularists, one wishes Mr. Cohen's book had then been available. Mrs. Besant's later superstitions are another story. The fact is that Mr. Cohen has made our principles more attractive because Materialism can now be authoritatively "re-stated" without the limitations which he has, once for all, repudiated.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH.

*That wonderful authority on Science (and Wit) Mr. Arnold Lunn, says: "The Materialist, like the madman, is not hampered by the sense of humour."

Ecclesiastes

"A little thought is Sexton to all the world."

Thorcau.

HAD the preacher possessed "a little thought" he would have been Sexton to *The Book of Ecclesiastes*. The foolishness of preaching never found better illustration than in its pages. The Preacher, like his brethren, does nothing but preach. Work and sanity of thinking go hand in hand, but any sort of work is foreign to his nature. Deceit, as might be expected, is resorted to in the first verse. He would have us believe that his words are those of the Son of David—Solomon—King in Jerusalem. But in i. 16, this fiction becomes evident:—

"I communed with my heart, saying, Behold I am become great and have made advances in wisdom above all who were before me in Jerusalem." Again in ii. 9: "I was great and surpassed all who had been before me in Jerusalem; and still my wisdom continued with me." Further he speaks of having displayed wisdom under the sun. (ii. 19).

Would the wisest man in all the world have been guilty of such vain boasting? And what does the author mean by making the Preacher say, "All who had been before me in Jerusalem," when he had had only one predecessor—David? and had Solomon been the Preacher would we have heard of unjust rulers as in iii. 16; iv. 1; the extortions of provincial magistrates, v. 8; and the elevation of inferior men to high station, x. 5-7? The greatest objection of all is that the book seems to have been written after Solomon had been devoutly sleeping with his fathers for at least 500 years.

But whether the Preacher was Solomon or not, he makes many suggestive remarks about wisdom, many foolish ones, and many of a hopelessly contradictory nature. His method, or lack of one, may explain why.

When Garth Wilkinson was writing his *Improvisations from the Spirit* (Reviewed by B.V. under the heading of "A Strange Book") he choose a theme, wrote it down, then waited patiently for the first impression upon the mind which, however strange it might be, he considered the beginning of the evolution of that theme. But our author does not seem to have chosen a theme. He seems to have just sat, or lain down, and recorded the impressions dictated by the mood then reigning. So it cannot be wondered at that he had a very questionable and changing sort of wisdom, if indeed it can be called wisdom at all.

Wisdom is good, he says, with an inheritance; and

it is an advantage to those who see the sun that they are in the shady side of it. Wisdom is like the shade of money; but the advantage of the knowledge of wisdom is—it will give life to him who is a follower of it. (vii. 11-12.)

Then, lest we take his advice too seriously, he warns us: "Be not over righteous; nor dive too far into wisdom, lest peradventure, thou be struck with astonishment. Run not into an excess of wickedness nor become hardened, that thou mayest not die untimely (vii. 16). Here whether he was fully conscious of it or not, the writer struck a great truth, which didn't entirely depend on the depth of the dive, it being necessary only to be completely immersed in the wave of wisdom to get a thrill of astonishment.

He was in a way conscious of the value of wisdom: "I saw indeed that there is an advantage in wisdom above folly, like the advantage of light above darkness. . . . But one event happeneth to them all" (ii. 13-15). This seems a much too democratic event for him. So he adds—"And as the same event will happen to me as happened to the fool, why have I studied wisdom?" But had he studied it he never would have asked such a silly question. Study, to him, meant only idle dreaming.

Truth, occasionally, does seem to drop unconsciously from him: "Wisdom is better than implements of war." True! But implements of war would not exist but for our lack of wisdom.

Finishing his observations on wisdom he informs us: "Because the preacher was wise, because he taught mankind wisdom; that the ear might find what is comely from parables, the teacher made diligent search to find pleasing words and a writing of rectitude—words of truth. . . . There is no end of making many books. And much study is a weariness to the flesh." (xii. 9-12).

Had the author possessed a spirit like Pantagruel—"a certain jollity of mind pickled in the scorn of fortune," he might have written a rather remarkable book. Such a spirit would have prevented him from saying many foolish things. For instance: "Grief is better than laughter; for by a sadness of countenance a heart may be made better" (vii. 3). We find a saner view expressed in the Apocrypha—Ecclesiasticus xiii. 25—"The heart of a man changeth his countenance, whether it be for good or evil: and a merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance."

His melancholy, spiritless, selfish, view of life make him characteristically indifferent. The commonest facts of life upset him. He sees that physical events take place according to physical laws: The sun rises on the evil and the good, and the rain falls on the just and the unjust. There is no entirely new thing under the sun (i. 10). That which is crooked cannot be made straight, nor can wants be numbered (i. 15). The dead are not sensible of anything (ix. 5). That which befalleth the beast befalleth man. The same event happeneth to both. As the one dieth so dieth the other. And they have all one breath. What advantage then hath man over the beast? (iii. 19). Well, what of it all? The sensible man possessed of a little wisdom simply lets determined things to destiny hold unheavily their way, eats his bread with cheerfulness, and drinks his wine with a merry heart.

He complains that *his heart only had been gladdened* by his labour, he had no other reward (ii. 11). Could he have had a greater reward? If by being made glad by his labour he did not much remember the evil days of his life because of the joy of his heart, what more could he desire? Then in iii. 22, he tells us "that there is nothing good in the works of man, but that by which he can be made glad."

He is said by some to have been an Epicurean, by others, a fatalist, a Sadducee, and a sceptic. He was

everything by turns and nothing long. His form of scepticism was what Baxter (1737) called Egomism.

"I hated all the labour of mine hands for which I am toiling under the sun; because I must leave it to a man who is coming after me" (ii. 18). The mere fact that by so leaving it he was liquidating the debt owing to his father was no consideration of his.

So he sums up: "Let us eat, drink and be merry for to-morrow we die"—

"I praised pleasurable enjoyment, because there is nothing good for men under the sun—nothing save eating and drinking and being made glad" (viii. 15). "He that is of a merry heart," says Solomon, "hath a continual feast" (Prov. xv. 15). But the Preacher cannot feast without the company of skeletons. "Though a man may live many years and be delighted in them all, he will still remember that the days of darkness are many." (xi. 8).

Then he asks us to "Contemplate the works of God; for who can make him straight whom God hath made crooked?" (vii. 13).

"The sleep of the slave is sweet whether he eateth little or much. But the fulness of the rich suffereth him not to sleep." (v. 12).

"No man is absolute commander over wind to stop the current of it, and over the day of his death he hath no authority" (viii. 9).

"The fool folded his hands and devouring his flesh said, Better is one handful of rest, than two handfuls of labour and vexation of spirit" (iv. 5-6).

Then we get, shall we say? a Marxian proverb: "God made man upright, but they have found out many classes" (vii. 28).

One of the evils he speaks of is interesting: "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun as if something involuntary came from the presence of a person in authority." (x. 5).

Of the land he tells us that: "The profit of the land is for everyone. A king is appendant to the cultivated field" (v. 9). *Appendant to* is also translated *made to serve*.

And here follows a fatalistic outburst: "The race is not to the swift nor the battle to the mighty; nay not even bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding; nor favour to men of knowledge—that time and chance will happen to them all as forming one whole" (ix. 11). Was he thinking here of Society as a living Organism? But whether, or no, he comforts us with this practical observation: "Advantage will be in favour of the man who hath skill." (x. 10).

GEORGE WALLACE.

Australia Blushes to Confess It!

A DEVELOPMENT here, was the fixing of Sunday (September 10) as a day of united prayer in all the churches—Anglican and Catholics—for Divine guidance in the present troubled state of world affairs.

This move is at the instance of our Catholic-drenched Federal Prime Minister (J. A. Lyons).

Such an institution as a day of prayer throughout Australia would, at first sight, appear to be to our national shame. But it isn't. Naturally the clerics and priests unanimously welcome it. Their exultation knows no bounds. But to them, of course, it is expected that it would be like a carcass offered to a lot of ravenous crows. They saw it in a sort of recognition and buttress of their vanishing superstition—a means of stimulating the collections upon which they live, and retaining yet a little longer the victims upon whom they prey.

Outside this very natural clerical-priestly favour, however, the idea is far from having the endorsement of the great bulk of the people of Australia.

The jest of every second person you meet is, "I see that everything's going to be all right with the world after

Sunday next!" Nobody ever thinks of asking why. With the futility of the prayers well sized up, the only response is a smile of derision, if not disgust. Briefly, the whole thing amounts to nothing more than a day of prayer foisted upon the nation by the ponderous, religious fanatic that happens to find himself—by a peculiar combination of circumstances—at the head of our political affairs. His, alone, is the shame of it. For the credit of the present-day mentality of Australia let that be clearly stated.

Nor are even churchgoers themselves disposed to quietly countenance what is being done.

Many of these have publicly voiced their protests. Take, for example, A. J. Dalziel, Secretary of the Legion of Christian Youth. Conceded, it must be, that he is a prominent representative of the church. Yet, in the following published statement, Mr. Dalziel reveals that, side by side with the superstition he cherishes, he none the less possesses vigour and sanity:—

The slum clearances section of the Legion of Christian Youth will consider making a counter-petition to that proposed by the Prime Minister in his effort to invoke the aid of a higher power in the present troublous times.

We are amazed that church leaders should so readily rush in with unqualified support of Mr. Lyons' plans.

We note with concern that none of them asks him what he has done about promises made to the people which have been grossly dishonoured and unethically evaded.

Too many of our churchmen welcome the opportunity to pray for help, when the occasion demands that they stand on their feet and fight! Prayer to them becomes an excuse for doing nothing.

During the World War we had unforgettable examples of all sides inviting the Almighty to "come in" with them in order that the "justice" of their particular cause might triumph.

Prayer is used with an entire disregard of human obligations.

In this particular instance the Churches should unite to ask that the Lyons Government be moved to a higher sense of Australia's destiny, and filled with a knowledge that the best contribution we can make to world peace is in a nation that seeks the Kingdom of God on earth.

Slums abound in our cities; young men are unemployed in tens of thousands; relief workers live on a mere pittance; education and child welfare systems are archaic and financially starved.

On all sides our economy and social system cries out for drastic reconstruction.

God gave us a great land in which to dwell and to build a new civilization. Do Mr. Lyons and church leaders think that God is anxious to heed the supplications of those who refuse to help themselves?

Are we going to ask the man on the end of a dole-line, or the inhabitant of a squalid slum, to sing, "Praise God from Whom all blessings flow, praise Him, all creatures here below," when they rightly protest, "We are forgotten by God and man"?

It is possible, I would like to go on to say, that Mr. Lyons—or any others of the rapidly diminishing number who share his belief in prayer—can have the least idea of the relative proportions of the earth in the universe, or the even less significance of the inhabitants of the earth in the great scheme of things?

Science has revealed that the sun—that is, our sun—is a million times larger than the earth. There are countless millions of other suns. One of these suns—or, rather, one of the suns that have already come within our knowledge—is 27,000 million times the size of our sun. Further, there are bodies that can be observed, even with our present instruments, that are distant from us by well over one hundred million light years—that is to say, light, which travels 186,000 million miles a second, would take over one hundred million years to reach us. Relatively, then, is our earth—let us not bother about the people upon it—a mere speck of dust suspended in infinity.

Thus we come to the preposterous assumption that, for the intervention that Mr. Lyons seeks, there would have to be a conscious, deliberate departure—by the Power assumed to be in control—from the hitherto undeviating, immutable laws governing the whole vast universe, incomprehensible in its immensity!

Lighter, if none the less ridiculous, are the events to which I wish to make a brief, concluding reference.

Yesterday, a Sydney daily informed us that Hitler was being acclaimed in Germany as "God's messenger."

God's services are therefore being sought in very conflicting interests. In Germany, He is wanted—in fact, is already giving His blessing—on the one side; and in Australia, through Mr. Lyons, He is to specially interest Himself next Sunday on the other side! Quite in keeping with all this is it to read, in the same issue of the Sydney daily to which I have referred, the remarks by a clergyman (Rev. George Nesbitt) at the burial of a universally-esteemed Sydney cartoonist—Tom Glover. To nobody, I must say, could a high tribute more fittingly be paid. But—listen to what the Rev. Nesbitt had to say! "Why a man with such genius," he declared, "should be cut off at the early age of 47 is a mystery to us. God, however, never makes mistakes. He needs Tom Glover to do greater work than he did here. I think that is the reason why God calls some sooner than others."

God "needs Tom Glover to do greater work than he did here." Presumably the assistance required by God—to prevent God from working overtime, or contravening the heavenly union rules—is because of the varying, multitudinous demands that are being made upon Him by Mr. Lyons and other of the Lyons-kidney. But, for a fatuous, parsonical bleat, could the Rev. Nesbitt be suitably rewarded with anything less than a special, mulishly-designed halo?

Or, still more to the point, is not the church from within—through such deplorable examples as the Rev. Nesbitt—a most potent agency in burlesquing itself out of existence?

FRANK HILL.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

Acid Drops

Lord Horder has been lecturing to the Edinburgh Philosophical Institution on the relation between medicine and religion. We have had no opportunity of reading a report of his address, so we are quite unable to criticize it. But an article in the *Church Times* says that Lord Horder insisted there was no opposition between medicine and religion. The truth of this is, of course, wholly dependent upon how one defines religion, and to a great many it is quite easy so to do as to make it agree with anything, even with Atheism. But if Lord Horder used "religion" with any regard to its historic significance, and with regard to its meaning to-day, then to say that there is no opposition between medicine and religion is just nonsense. We are not, we repeat, criticizing Lord Horder, for that we will wait until we are able to see a report of the address. We are only taking Lord Horder as the *Church Times* presents him, and that, we repeat is as a very nonsensical person.

Of course, it is impossible for any one to present a scientific study of medicine without taking religion into account. The handling of the sick and the infirm, begins as nearly everything begins, in an atmosphere of religion or to put it another way, the handling of the sick and the interpretation of disease are at first a religious handling. Disease, physical and mental, is in terms of evil spirits, or at best is due to a mysterious influence that soon becomes definitely animistic in character. That aspect of disease is not dead yet. It persists in the ignorant interpretation of such things as "Faith-healing," and also, one regrets to say, in the unintelligent attitude of many medical practitioners. We say that after making a due allowance for the fact that in the treatment of disease, a wise doctor has often to pretend to agree with the fantastic belief of his patient in order to effect a cure. A very ordinary man may often treat a mind diseased by utilizing the fancies of his patient, when a much superior individual fails because he is lacking the appreciation of a factor that is of considerable importance. But in utilizing the patient in this way a plain John Smith is just as powerful as Jesus Christ.

But this has nothing to do with an alleged connexion of medicine with religion, for the kind of treatment we have in mind would have no influence whatever on an Atheist, while it might be of great use when dealing with a member of the Salvation Army or Dean Matthews.

But we can scarcely credit that Lord Horder meant what the *Church Times* makes him mean when it reports him as saying there is no opposition between medicine and religion; for medicine, like astronomy, or biology, or ethics, becomes scientific only in proportion as it throws off religious ideas. Assuming that Lord Horder actually said something which admitted the interpretation of the *Church Times*, we have another illustration of the evil of public men not being more careful in the quality of the terms they use. For that journal goes on to say that there is "the most intimate connexion between the two," that "St. Bartholomew's Hospital is an expression of the mind of Christ," and that "the campaign against cancer is entirely in accord with our Lord's command to heal the sick." That is indeed piling the Pelion of absurdity on the Ossa of falsehood. If Lord Horder's language gave the slightest ground for such statements he ought to issue a public apology, and promise not to do it again.

Consider whether the intimate connexion between medicine and religion was ever any other than the connexion between astronomy and religion at a time when the planets were believed to be kept in their orbits by the activities of angels? And could a place such as St. Bartholomew's Hospital be in accord with the mind of Christ, except on the assumption that priests took the place of doctors, and prayers were substitutes for physic? And is the Cancer research campaign in accord with the command to heal the sick, save on condition that it ceases looking for germs and hunts for spirits? For the only cure that "Our Lord" ever gave for healing the sick, the insane, the epileptic, was that of prayer and faith in God. We have come across many cases of dishonesty in connexion with religious pleading, but never one quite so palpably false as this one. As a matter of fact religion was the greatest enemy that medical science has had to fight, and of these enemies the greatest has been the Christian Church.

Speaking on October 21, Hitler boasted of the immense extent of territory that has been brought under German ownership, and declared that this was done only because Germany was strong enough to enforce its demands. In plain English this means that he will take whatever he desires, by consent if given, by force otherwise. There is nothing new in this form of statecraft. It was in full swing in this country when highwaymen met travellers with a "Stand and Deliver."

All Communist organizations have been suppressed in Czechoslovakia, and also Communist papers. This is, of course, by order of Hitler, to whom Czech Ministers now refer for instructions. The funds of the societies have been confiscated. That follows naturally. In Nazi ethics robbery and suppression go hand in hand. How much one motivates the other is a matter on which opinion is divided. It is certain that no criticism of Germany will now be permitted among the people who were "saved" by the Munich pact—perhaps the only "friendly" pact in the history of the world, in which the differences were settled by one party getting more than was asked for, and the other party counting it as a triumph of diplomacy. We are quite sure that the Royal Society of Experienced Burglars would be quite willing to make a similar pact with the police of this country at any time the Prime Minister cares to invite representatives to Downing Street.

A correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph* (October 19), supplies the following figures with regard to some of the towns and villages taken over by Germany from Czechoslovakia. No vote of the inhabitants was taken. Comment is quite unnecessary:—

	Population	
	Czechs	Germans
Moravsky Krumlov	2,844	502
Znojmo	11,691	7,988
Postorna	3,503	285
Breclav	9,534	2,028
Dobruška	2,694	2,333
Zbuz	1,407	591
Policka	4,934	90
Hodslavice	1,730	—
Koprivnice	3,706	697
Stramberk	3,200	47
Pribram	4,696	186
Petrkovice	2,249	311
Svinov	3,935	411
Ludgerovice	2,740	454
Zábreh	3,635	1,650

Nazi papers have discovered that the Pope is really a Jew. There is a mistake here, we think. It is the founder of the Pope's religion, if he ever existed, who was a Jew. Another discovery is that the German clergy who are opposing Hitler are all Communists. That seems quite a good reason, to Nazis, both in Germany and in the British Branch of the German Nazis, for putting these Communistic clergy in concentration camps. A good way of getting them there would be to recall the Members of the famous Munich Conference to decide what should be done with them.

Sixteen American preachers, we learn from the *Boston Evening News* are accused by the *Presbyterian*, an American Journal, of "heading for humanism." This is a dreadful charge and we are afraid there is something in it. A sermon by Dr. Charles R. Brown, Dean Emeritus of Yale Divinity School, is described as "sheer nonsensical unbelief." Dr. Halford Luccock, of Yale, presents "a very weak estimate of Jesus and ends in a bitter agnosticism." Dr. Irving Maurer gives "some good advice but no Christianity." Dr. Palmer, President of the Chicago Theological Seminary "offers a silly sermon and talks about 'escape mechanism' instead of faith." Dr. Stafford of the Old South Church of Boston, preaches a sermon which has "no religion in it but its text."

This is bad enough, but there are others. The late Dr. Jay T. Stocking gives "a nice ethical lecture with no religion." Dr. Fosdick's contribution is "commonplace, full of needless repetitions and obvious generalities." Dr. Harbourn, President of Brown University, is guilty of a sermon "stupid and trite." And Dr. Tittle of Evanston, Illinois, gives "perhaps the most harmful sermon in the book, thoroughly agnostic, with absolutely no faith in the Bible." Dr. Tweedy, of Yale University, gives "a good practical talk, unencumbered with any religion, but offering a low view of God," and Dr. Robert R. Wicks, chaplain of Princeton University, "denies point blank the substitutionary atonement, calls the Divinity of Christ a theory, seems to have no adequate conception of the Holy Spirit, and makes no valid distinction between Christ and other men."

Here's a pretty kettle of fish! There seems to be no crumb of sustenance in the whole lot for the Presbyterian God. The *Presbyterian* seems to be far from pleased, as well, that these men are "heading for humanism." We think a little solace might have been drawn from this fact by all decent human beings save those bemused and corrupted by a ridiculous old creed.

The July-August issue of *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology*, an American publication, contains the following:—

Only a few of those who are familiar with prisons and reformatories as they are being conducted to-day will dispute the assertion that in general, religious work has lost much of its vitality during the years which have seen rapid progress in medical services, education, social work and other modern methods of rehabilitation.

Religion may be going through the process of being "found out," but alongside go other processes "heading

for humanism." We commend the above piece of candor as an illustration of the point.

The Bishop of Bath and Wells wants Christians to laugh, and to find humour in the Bible. Well we have always said there is much material for laughter, and the first editor of this paper, G. W. Foote, tried to make Christians see it. He made thousands of people laugh—and a Christian Judge and a Christian Jury sent him to prison for twelve months for trying to make the hearts of the believers merry. One third of our *Bible Handbook* is filled with these humorous aspects of the Bible.

The Bishop agrees that we never read of Jesus "actually" even smiling, but we may picture him as doing so. Quite so. Anyone may picture Jesus as doing anything from riding in a steeplechase to dancing the Can-Can. There is no law against one imagining Jesus doing a variety of things so long as what you imagine does not bring you within the scope of the blasphemy laws. And, as a matter of fact, that is exactly how Christians deal with Jesus. Mr. Lansbury imagines him as an ardent Socialist, while the Pope thunders against anyone who does not imagine him denouncing Socialism root and branch. All the different Jesus Christs the world hears about are born in this way, and have no better foundation than a riotous and uncritical imagination. He is an ideal family man, and an advocate of celibacy; an uncompromising Pacifist and an advocate of "righteous" war. He is full of compassion for the wrong-doer and ready to send him straight to hell. There is hardly a theory the world has heard of that cannot be fitted on to Jesus Christ one way or another. And that is the crowning proof that we are dealing with a myth and not a man. It is not in this way that we deal with historical characters.

A Roman Catholic barrister, Mr. H. Malone, is shocked and grieved at the "scurrilous blasphemy" which goes unpunished in this country. We beg to say that we are not at all shocked at the scurrilous lying that very highly-placed Roman Catholic preachers indulge in. We were neither shocked nor surprised, for example, at the orgy of lying Cardinal Hinsley indulged in concerning the "Godless Conference." And we are not surprised that when this lying was completely exposed the Cardinal made no attempt at apology, and Roman Catholics, such as Mr. Malone, appear to have expected that an apology should have followed exposure. Probably these people felt that to lie for the glory of God was quite in order. Mr. Malone, who ought to know something of law, must be aware that if some of his statements had been of individuals, instead of an organization, he might have found himself in the law courts. As it is, we hope that Freethinkers will not easily let the memory of Cardinal Hinsley's lying die.

Mr. Malone makes the suggestion that a Catholic Society should be formed for the prosecution for blasphemers. He thinks that "magistrates would convict." His law is as poor as his intellectual morality. A magistrate simply cannot convict for blasphemy. His power extends only to sending the alleged blasphemer for trial. It is the jury that convicts, while the judge, if a verdict of guilty is found, passes sentence.

Fifty Years Ago

PROFESSOR TULLOCH, whose life is just published, was agreeably surprised to find that Mr. John Morley "looked more like a dissenting minister than an Atheist." After pondering this passage for several hours we are still puzzled to know what it means. What sort of an animal did Professor Tulloch expect to see in an Atheist? Is there something peculiar in an Atheist's face, in the shape of his head, in the set of his ears, or in his walk? Or what is it that marks him off as a separate variety of the human species?

The Freethinker, October 28, 1888.

Freethinkers and Czechoslovakia

The following letter, dated October 14, has been received by the National Secular Society, on behalf of Czech Freethinkers, who are among the many thousands of sufferers in Czech territory:—

Fifty of our branches, out of a total of 260, are now in ceded territory. Many of our members were forced to flee from this territory, especially since, as exponents of Freethought, they would have been placed in concentration camps and prisons. Of those remaining, we have not as yet received definite information, we only know that many were taken, in loaded trucks, into the interior of Germany.

Of those who escaped, the majority came without anything but the clothes on their backs, a lucky few managed to save parts of their household goods. We helped these friends of ours by sending cars, etc., for them, this, of course, made deep inroads on our finances. And although there are many who do not require our help, there are many more who turn to us daily for financial assistance. In Prague alone, we have 35 members, with their families. Also in other towns and cities there are many refugees, approximately 200,000, many of whom are our members. Here, again, our information is not exact, since our railways, post offices, etc., have been torn apart and disorganized. It will take at least several weeks before an exact survey can be made.

Of the most needy, we list those now in Prague. They are living in the large hall of the Lidovy Dum People's House in Kosire, Prague.

Because of the new conditions which require our immediate help, we will be unable to continue with the teaching of Secular Ethics in schools, and will be unable to continue with the publication of books, since financially we cannot do more, at the moment, than meet the pressing needs which the situation has occasioned.

Any financial assistance you may be able to give us will be most gratefully received and appreciated.

E. M. VOSKA.

In the circumstances I feel warranted in acting in my Presidential capacity without calling the Executive together. I am quite sure that my action will be endorsed by every member of the Executive, and am sure also that every help will be given by members of the N.S.S. and readers of the *Freethinker*. Every precaution will be taken to make certain that the money reaches its proper destination.

There is no need to dilate upon the sufferings of the Czech people at the moment, and among these the blight of Freethinkers will not be less painful than that of the refugees as a whole.

The distribution of the money will be in the hands of the Volna Myslenka Committee for Social Welfare.

The need is urgent. Thousands of Freethinkers are refugees from their homes, robbed of their possessions, and even their lives threatened. We must do what we can to help.

Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to me, *Freethinker* Office, 61 Farringdon Street, E.C.4, and will be handed over to the N.S.S. I think the single address will be better for the time being. More will be said next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN,

President, National Secular Society.

Sugar Plums

To-day (October 30) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Picton Hall, Liverpool. The chair will be taken at 7.0, doors open at 6.30. Admission will be free, with reserved seats at rs. each. This will probably be Mr. Cohen's only visit to Liverpool this season. He has promised, for this year at least, to do a little less lecturing than usual. It is not so much the tax of lecturing as the long railway journey added. This means three days absorbed out of a week, and with a weekly paper on his hands, little time is left for the amount of rest he ought to take.

On Sunday next (November 6) Mr. Cohen will lecture in the Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. The meeting will be in the morning, 11 o'clock. The subject will be "The New Science and the New God." Admission is free.

Many thanks to those who are sending us along the names and addresses of probable subscribers. It is a good way of introducing this journal to those who are not acquainted with it. So keep the good game going, and thanks again to all volunteers for service. To get our circulation nearer paying point, would relieve us of considerable anxiety.

The Roman Catholics are complaining that the B.B.C. did not broadcast an account of their procession of "Reparation to God." The B.B.C. reply as they did not broadcast the Conference of the World Union of Freethinkers, they did not feel justified in advertising the Roman Catholic "Counter-procession." The Catholics retort that it was not a procession, it was "a public act of reparation" for the insult to God. Now what evidence is there that the recording angel did not put it down in his ledger "To credit, one counter-demonstration?" These be great questions at the side of which the question of the peace of the world is trifling.

Mr. R. H. Rosetti was one of a number of speakers at the Towers Cinema, Hornchurch on Sunday last. The meeting was held in support of a movement to secure the Sunday opening of Cinemas in that area, and nearly a thousand people were present. We are glad Mr. Rosetti was present to put the Freethought point of view, and he did well in resting his case on a question of social sanity and freedom.

We wish, on behalf of the N.S.S. Executive, to call the attention of all Branches desiring to issue circulars or public notices in the name of the N.S.S., or of one of its Branches, that they must first submit the circular to the Executive for approval. We hope that members will appreciate the need for a rule of this description.

Nuneaton has a new Methodist Superintendent Minister. In replying to the speeches of welcome at a reception he said:—

One thing which is being insisted upon more than anything else nowadays is the importance of A.R.P. I wonder whether it will sound a very strange thing if I suggest to-night that the *most effective form of A.R.P. is to come to church and say your prayers.*

It does not sound at all strange. It is Christianity's characteristic contribution to social and world chaos.

Fear not the tyrants shall rule for ever,
Or the priests of the bloody faith;
They stand on the brink of that mighty river,
Whose waves they have tainted with death:
It is fed from the depths of a thousand dells,
Around them it foams, and rages, and swells;
And their swords and their sceptres I floating see,
Like wrecks in the surge of eternity.

Shelley.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

J. R. LICKFOLD.—Thanks for calling our attention to Sir Richard Tute's article on "After Materialism," in the *Hilbert Journal*. We had already read it, and found it the most striking mass of ignorance and prejudice we have seen for some time. We are rather surprised at its admission, but it would require a volume to expose all its errors, and it is really not worth the space that a reply would occupy.

FREETHINKER ENDOWMENT TRUST.—F.M.V., £5; H. Bennett, IS.

G. PRESCOTT.—We have a deal of sympathy with the opinions expressed in your letter.

J. HUMPHREY.—If we only had at our command a tenth of the funds that Christian liars credit us with, we could stir up things very much more than we do at present. Our only regret about the tales is that they are not true.

E. WATSON.—Thanks for securing new reader. Keep it up. There may be another one round the corner.

"OWD JACK."—We are not surprised at the boycott. With many papers it is more of a compliment to be boycotted than to be welcomed. The more need for doing what one can and where one can to create a healthier intellectual atmosphere. We may deal with Hall Caine's *Life of Jesus* later. His book appears, from what we have seen of it to be a trifle more ridiculous than a purely orthodox work. To be completely ridiculous is one thing, and one may admire its consistency. But to see what is ridiculous and attempt to be logically convincing is to fill one with a feeling approaching contempt.

J. G. BURDON.—We are pleased to hear that Mr. Clayton's debate with Councillor Maxfield on "No Man can be an Atheist," a curious subject considering the number of Atheists in the world, was so successful. We are not surprised to learn that Mr. Clayton put up so good a fight. From what we know of Mr. Clayton, we feel certain he put in some useful propagandist work. We regret that want of space prevents our printing the report you are good enough to send.

H. MONTMORENCY.—We received your letter, and smiled, with approval, at its contents. But you could hardly expect a reply. In such matters silence is safer than speech. Still, letters such as yours do help Christians to realize there are others. And that is good propaganda.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

The Church Congress

THE Church of England held one of its Congresses the other day at Bristol, but it seems to have attracted very little notice in our National press. I did not even hear the B.B.C. make any allusion to its activities—though, of course, I missed quite a number of news items. Nothing epoch-making, nothing startling, appears to have resulted from the reverend brains behind the meetings, and though a few attendant persons seem to have thought the proceedings utterly useless, their voices were indeed those crying in the wilderness.

A Freethinker like myself has, I think, the right to ask of what earthly use is such a Congress? One can hear parsons and even Bishops any day talk by the score, and talk sometimes sense, and sometimes nonsense. But here, on such an occasion, the result of all the blather should have been at least something positive. I have searched through the long reports given in the *Church Times*, to find out what good it has done for Christianity, and I can only shrug my shoulders and smile. A whale of a talk to produce a tiny mouse—really that and little more.

This does not mean that the average clerical speaker is quite unaware what he is up against in this crisis-weary world of a million opinions. He knows it quite well, but he likes to think—or let everybody else think—that he has the remedy for all the evil in the world. There it is, and if you will not take it, then you must not be surprised if crises come and stay. For example, it was the Archbishop of York who claimed that "the Bible fits all cases." No matter what the trouble was, or what was wanted anywhere, at any time, from one generation to another, the Gospel "is found to supply the needs of men in all their varieties of circumstance." There is, in fact, no limit whatever to what the Bible (or the Gospel) could do.

It would be useless to point out to the Archbishop that the members of his own Church have exploded Bible claims over and over again. Even the exploded parts would be found to suit men "in all their varieties of circumstance." I wonder, as I read this drivel, what the delegates at the Congress thought—really thought—of their Archbishop. I wonder whether they were thinking how the magic and heart-felt words of Obadiah, or Habakkuk, or even Nahum, would have helped people if German bombs were dropping all around them? Would the mighty Hitler himself tremble at Zephaniah, or Mussolini hide his head in shame as he thought of Haggai?

The words, words, words, which poured from the Archbishop of York like a mighty cascade reflected the kind of thing one heard right through the meetings. All the clichés so familiar to sermon readers were there in abundance. "The law and the testimony," "His purpose will not fail," "The Holy Spirit possesses him," "All who accept the Gospel are visibly united," "What the world manifestly needs," "The truth made known to us"—alas, how familiar are these phrases. They have done duty for ages, and, of course, will do duty as long as Christianity lasts, for these and similar pious exhortations can be strung together by the yard, all sound and fury signifying nothing.

Perhaps something of the sort was sensed by the assembly for a few parsons determined to show their boldness by asking inconvenient questions, and doing their best to supply answers which would pacify some people both in and out of the Church. There was Dr. Oldham, for instance, "whose matter was far bolder than his manner," says the Report. He admitted that "Science seems to have made God irrelevant to human life." This was not naturally the Christian view, for

God had to come in somewhere, and Dr. Oldham could not understand how it was, that though the Gospel was "something that happened in history," and of such profound significance, it "should have so little force and punch and bite." He came to the conclusion that "one of the chief hindrances to the acceptance of the Gospel is the glibness of its presentation." In other words I suppose had the presentation of the Gospel been not so glib millions more believers would have entered the fold. Its truth or falsity would not have been the question. Miracles would have been accepted as a matter of course. And we had to have this kind of nonsense delivered at a Church Congress!

The Very Rev. A. H. Jones felt it was rather incongruous that a Congress of Churchpeople should discuss the "content" of the Gospel, but he put this down partly to "the richness of the Gospel heritage"! I have no doubt that dozens of his hearers must have thanked God for such a profound thinker as Mr. Jones. He was followed by Dame Christabel Pankhurst, who has so far left the Secularism of her father that she swallows, not only the whole of the Gospel "content," but lots more besides, and is awaiting patiently the Second Coming of Christ. For her, giving women the Vote has not resulted in that happy Paradise predicted by the Suffragettes in general, and by herself in particular. Only the return of Christ will do that. Unfortunately, in this assembly of males she was only allowed to speak for five minutes.

The second half of the session was devoted to "the moving of the Holy Spirit"—a subject over which parsons can discourse for hours on end and then some. Christian worship was a necessary adjunct to understand the subject, and the Church is there "to liberate and mediate the forces of the Spirit of God." What all this, properly elaborated, actually means the Lord knows; I do not. Nor can I make head or tail of the eloquence of Brother Algy of the Order of St. Francis, who claimed that "Jesus will never be seen by the Church or manifested through the Church until the Church is marked by the stigmata of the Passion."

The Rev. O. S. Tomkins then regaled the assembly with a "high-brow" paper for which he apologized. He claimed for it "an honest attempt to read the signs of the times" coming to the conclusion—the only possible one, of course, otherwise he could not have been a priest—that "one full perfect and sufficient Sacrifice still avails." It does not seem to me to be very courageous to come to such a conclusion.

Mr. H. H. Elvin, the President of the Trades Union Congress, dealt with all sorts of aspects in the political and social situation, coming to the conclusion that "the Church should become a redeeming and a revolutionary force"; and Lady Cynthia Colville wanted to know why "Christians make such a poor show?" And so it went on, becoming more dreary and dismal. Most of the speeches either went on old and familiar lines or, unable to face any real issue, came to the only possible conclusion at such a Congress, that if only the world would accept Christ altogether, without any question, all would be more than well. Even Heaven itself could not give us a better time. But Christ had to be all in all.

The *Church Times* came to the conclusion that the Congress was a success, but then proceeded to find fault with some of the proceedings. There were too many "set speakers." The "vagueness" of many things said "left the Congress at its conclusion without any one clear message or line of constructive advance." This should have damned any Congress altogether, but there were many other even more damning criticisms. Many existing defects in the Church are due "to the inability of the Church's official leaders to take responsibility." And could anything more severe be said than "an overwhelming promi-

ence was given to the ranks of regular speakers enunciating notions which have been already heard on many previous occasions"?

It is good to think that the troubles facing the Church are by no means over yet.

H. CUTNER.

"Exodus . . . Pagan Tyranny . . ."

THE above words form part of the title of an article in *Headway*, a monthly review of the League of Nations. The main subject is the Evian (Refugee) Conference. "Here," we read, "is Pagan tyranny riding triumphant over a great part of the world."

Presuming that the writer used the word "Pagan" in the usual sense of unbeliever—in a "Christian country" an unbeliever in Christianity—and crediting him with writing without tongue in cheek—we must regard the title and much of the matter of the article as an extreme example of the myopia engendered by strong religious obsession.

Cursorily read, by one who has little or no knowledge of the facts of the case, the first dozen or so lines would mislead him to the conclusion that non-Christians are persecuting Christians. The main feature of the imbroglio is, however, the persecution of non-Christians (Jews) by Christians. Further on in the article this appears clearly enough. Jews, as the chief people affected, must, of course, come first, as in the statement that the 600,000 "marked down for plunder," are "Jews and many non-Aryan Christians."

We are informed that Hitler is a Roman Catholic, and that he intends to form an independent German Catholic Church. Mussolini, who is following the bestial course of Hitler, is also said to be a Roman Catholic. The excuse that the policy is a racial one is futile. Anthropologists assure us that the word Jew can only be properly used in a religious sense, and the word Aryan in reference to language. And there is evidently nothing essential to distinguish the current from other of the many savage pogroms that have occurred.

Another article in the same issue of the same periodical, "What the Struggle Between the Church and State in Germany Means to Mankind," contains still more blatant religious propaganda. In Germany, it is stated, "Man is the centre. God has become a nebulous figure who always agrees with him"; also that "This conception is incompatible with the revelation of God through Jesus Christ"; and so forth.

Below this there is a reference to the twenty-five points of the Nazi plan, which "includes a declaration that their programme is based upon a 'Positive Christianity.'" This, however, is dismissed by the curious statement that "The Church was to recognize that the revelation of God through Adolph Hitler was on the same level as His revelation through Jesus Christ." "So the Church split." What Church? This can be guessed at from the occurrence in the article of the words "heretic," and "Confessional Church" (twice in each case).

But the most absurd idea in the article is perhaps the following, which is said to be one of the results of the persecution: ". . . a new realization on the part of the 'intelligentsia' that their intellectual gods are powerless to help them, and that they must turn to Jesus Christ" (!)

Needless to say there is no possibility of getting in *Headway* a reply to such vagaries (I tried some time ago, but the mild letter I sent was not printed), though probably all Freethinkers strongly condemn such tyranny, whether by or of Christians, while presum-

ably the largest Christian body, if no other, does not. Roman Catholic leaders avow their intention to persecute when and wherever they are in a majority. Father Ronald Knox, an English priest, kindly tells us that the execution of "heretics" and "heresiarchs" is now "out of date," but clearly indicates that the papal church will not hesitate to impose on us repressive measures when that becomes possible; and Roman priests, such as Cardinal Lepicier and Father de Luca plainly advocate the "power of the sword."

The attempt to use the League of Nations, its Union, or any publication concerned primarily with them, as a vehicle of religious propaganda is probably doing a great deal of harm to the cause and organization of peace; and this course is rendered far worse when it includes the booming of Christianity, to the irritation of Jews, Unitarians, Freethinkers and the Mohammedans, Hindus, Buddhists, etc., who are in this country.

Within my own experience there has been an attempt, happily unsuccessful, to have the meetings of delegates of the London Regional Federation opened with prayer; and I have had to protest against the practice of opening with prayer the Committee meetings of a local branch of the Union.

J. REEVES.

Is there Life on Mars?

IN posing such a question as this the aim should be to distinguish between idle speculation and reasoned thought based on what is known. Pursued in the latter spirit the inquiry will bring us to consider the important question: What are the conditions under which life is possible? That is, what requirements must nature fulfil in order that pieces, or biographies, of matter will develop organic structure wherewith to display reversible responses to the environment of such complexity as to warrant a special terminology (e.g., reactivity, receptivity, reproduction)? What we know of the Planet Mars provides a handy testing ground. Speculation received an impetus from the alleged discovery of canals on Mars (Schiaparelli; Milan, 1877), but very few astronomers would to-day allow their validity. They are not even sure that the marks indicate natural channels (another translation of *canali*), let alone artificial constructions of such width as to be unobservable even with the best telescope at 50 million miles.

Let us ask (a) What are the elementary requirements of life as we know it? and (b) How does Mars fulfil these?

Life requires water, which immediately sets a limit to the temperatures at which it can exist (i.e., between boiling and freezing points). It also needs oxygen, although certain bacteria get on all right with nitrogen and no oxygen. This, however, is inconceivable in more complex forms, and we come to another requirement, plant food. Food provides energy by being burned, and so oxygen is necessary; burning is the combination of oxygen with other chemical elements. We inhale air and exhale carbon dioxide, the product of burning carbon to saturation.

Water seems indispensable. It is the best solvent, and its high chemical stability precludes it from interfering seriously with the chemicals it has to carry. It is, further, an agent in assisting chemical changes in the body. These changes depend on a fair stability of temperature, again provided for by water. Our own bodies are, of course, 70 per cent water.

It is clear, then, that the temperature must not be such as to turn water into ice or into steam (unless some mechanism were evolved and naturally selected

to provide a warming-up or cooling down apparatus to fit the air for the lungs).

It will be very commonplace to note that the planet's heat will be determined by its closeness to the sun. Mercury, the closest, is so hot that zinc would melt on its surface. Jupiter, Saturn, Pluto (the newly found one), Neptune and Uranus are too cold. On either side of Earth are Venus (nearer the sun) and Mars (farther away). The first cannot be seen for cloud, and so it is literally shrouded in mystery. This leaves Mars as our sole possible companion, at least in our particular corner of the universe.

Temperature on Mars rises to 50°F. in daytime, but at night falls to about 100°F. below zero.

Is it too much to assume that some tiny Martian creatures might once have grown the habit of "burrowing" at night-time in order to keep warm? Might they have propagated this characteristic? At the level of intelligence the intense cold could be artificially combated. What of the novelist who writes of future underground cities on Earth? The earth's orbit is annually taking it three-eighths of an inch farther from its star, which is itself becoming colder. Will Man, a Superman, in his nth generation lie down to extinction and take it quietly? Or will he explore the regions of what, millions of years ago, the Christian Era, in its mental enslavement, called Hell? Will he make ultra-violet lamps do for sunshine, will he manufacture a Spring, Summer and Autumn for the growth of plants? Or will he eat chemical tablets and keep plants for beauty, animals for pleasure and experiment? With coal and oil reserves used up, will he find some way of transmuting matter for power?

For temperature, Mars might be ticked off as "O.K." Has it an atmosphere for its oxygen supply? It has. Surface markings on Mars are dimmer when viewed obliquely. This is because there is more atmosphere to look through, just as there is more peel to cut through if we pass our knife through the orange to cut off a thin slice instead of full on.

But any gas tends to spread itself. How does Mars stop its atmosphere from being dissipated into interstellar space? The answer is, by gravity. But while the Earth is efficient enough to keep round it an atmosphere rich enough for life's needs, can Mars do the same?

Now Newton discovered that any spherical body behaves, for gravitation, as though its mass were entirely concentrated at the centre. The size and mass of Mars being known, it is, then, quite simple to estimate its gravitational effect. Pitted against Earth, the score is Earth 5, Mars 2. Therefore Mars has not the same hold on its atmosphere as has the earth; it will be less dense, more rarified.

Are there the necessary conditions and constituents in Martian atmosphere? Seeing that its history and origin are much the same as Earth's there is reason to suppose so. White specks round Mars are taken for clouds, and an analysis of the sunlight reflected from Mars indicates the presence of oxygen and water vapour.

Are there plants to provide animal food? Dark patches, perhaps once seas, undergo interesting changes of colour. As the polar caps disappear in the Martian summer they become green; later they are brown, and later fade. The theory that these may indicate seasons is supported by the discovery of the gas ammonia, a universal product of decaying vegetation, in the Martian atmosphere (by light analysis).

Should anyone ever fly to a planet he might have to acclimatize himself to many strange phenomena, for example, the probability of an indigo sky on Mars, perhaps deepening to black, as on the Earth Moon, the peculiar behaviour of Mars' two moons, and, perhaps chiefly, a change of weight. According to the

5.2 ratio the energy which would carry the body a yard forward on Earth might lift the Martian explorer off his feet, owing to the decreased pull of the planet. It might also be a test of respiratory powers to inhale sufficient of the looser atmosphere. The explorer would be well advised to take some atmosphere of his own!

G. H. TAYLOR.

On Education

THE early educational reformers believed that universal primary and, if possible, secondary education would free the world from its chains and make it "safe for democracy." If it has not done so—if, on the contrary, it has merely prepared the world for dictatorship and universal war—the reason is extremely simple. You cannot reach a given historical objective by walking in the opposite direction. If your goal is liberty and democracy, then you must teach people the arts of being free and governing themselves. If you teach them instead the arts of bullying and passive obedience, then you will not achieve the liberty and democracy at which you are aiming. . . . The two types of education—education for freedom and responsibility, education for bullying and subordination—co-exist in the democracies of the West, where nursery schools belong to the first, and most other schools to the second type. In Fascist countries not even nursery schools may belong to the first type. Significantly enough the Montessori Society of Germany was dissolved by the political police in 1935; and in July, 1936, Mussolini decreed the cessation of all official Montessori activities in Italy. In the early days of Lenin, Russian education was based, at every stage, upon principles essentially similar to those enunciated by Dr. Montessori. In the manifestos and decrees published shortly after Lenin's seizure of power one may read such phrases as these. Utilization of a system of marks for estimating the knowledge and conduct of the pupil is abolished. . . . Distribution of medals and insignia is abolished. The old form of discipline which corrupts the entire life of the school and the untrammelled personality of the child, cannot be maintained in the schools of labour. The progress of labour itself develops this internal discipline without which collective and rational work is unimaginable. . . . All examinations are abolished. . . . The wearing of school uniform is abolished.

On September 4, 1935, a Decree on Academic Reform was issued by the Stalin Government. This decree contained, among others, the following orders; instruct a commission . . . to elaborate a draft of a ruling for every type of school. The ruling must have a categorical and absolutely obligatory character for pupils as well as teachers . . . underlying the ruling on the conduct of pupils is to be placed a strict and conscientious application of discipline. . . . In the personal record there will be entered for the entire duration of his studies the marks of the pupil for every quarter, his prizes and his punishments. . . . A special apparatus of Communist Youth organizers is to be installed for the pupil inside and outside of school. They are to watch over the morality and the state of mind of the pupils. . . . Establish a single form of dress for the pupils of the primary, semi-secondary and secondary schools. . . . Any change for the worse in educational methods means a change for the worse in mentality of millions of human beings during their whole lifetime. Early conditioning . . . does not irrevocably and completely determine adult behaviour; but it does unquestionably make it difficult for individuals to think, feel and act otherwise than as they have been taught to do in childhood. Where social conditions are in harmony with the prevailing system of education, the task of getting outside the circle of early conditioning may be almost insuperably difficult. . . . Like every other instrument that man has invented, sport can be used either for good or evil purposes. Used well, it can teach endurance and courage, a sense of fair-play and a respect for rules, co-ordinated effort and the subordination of personal interests to those of the group. Used badly, it can encourage personal vanity, greedy desire for victory and

hatred for rivals, and intolerant *esprit de corps* and contempt for people who are beyond a certain arbitrarily selected pale. . . . Sport can be either a preparation for war, or, in some measure, a substitute for war; a trainer of potential war-mongers or of potential peace lovers. . . . It is for us to choose which part the organized amusements of children shall play. In the dictatorial countries the choice has been made, consciously and without compromise. Sport there is definitely a preparation for war—doubly a preparation. It is used, first of all, to prepare children for the military slavery which they will have to serve when they come of age—to train them in habits of endurance, courage, and co-ordinated effort, and to cultivate that *esprit de corps*, that group-vanity and group pride which are the very foundations of a good soldier. In the second place, it becomes an instrument of nationalistic propaganda. Football matches with teams belonging to foreign countries are treated as matters of national prestige, victory is hailed as triumph over an enemy, a sign of racial or national superiority; a defeat is put down to foul play and almost as *casus belli*. Optimistic theorists count sport as a bond between nations. In the present state of nationalistic feeling it is only another cause of international misunderstanding. The battles waged on the football field and the race-track are merely preliminaries to, and even contributory causes, of more serious contests. In a world that has no common religion or philosophy of life, but where every national group practises its own private idolatry, international football matches and athletic contests can do nothing but harm. . . . In the half-democracy of modern England, sport is not used solely as a preparation for war, and the fostering of group-vanity and group pride; it is also used for teaching boys to behave with genuine decency—in other words as a training in non-attachment. In the world as it is at present we cannot afford to be of two minds. Either we must make use of sport (and in general, the whole educational system) as device for training up non-attached, non-militaristic men and women, or else, under the urgent threat of war, we must make up our minds to Prussianize the Nazis and, on the playing fields of Eton and other schools, prepare for the winning of future Waterloos. The first alternative involves great risks. The second alternative can lead only to the worsening of international relations and ultimately to general catastrophe. Unhappily it is towards the second alternative that the rulers of England now seem to be inclining.

Ends and Means, by ALDOUS HUXLEY, pp. 184-190.

Stand Up!

STAND up, but not for Jesus!
It's a little late for that.
Stand up for justice and a jolly life.
I'll hold your hat.

Stand up, stand up for justice,
ye swindled little blokes!
Stand up and do some punching,
give 'em a few hard pokes.

Stand up for jolly justice
you haven't got much to lose:
a job you don't like and a scanty chance
for a dreary little booze.

Stand up for something different,
and have a little fun
fighting for something worth fighting for
before you've done.

Stand up for a new arrangement
for a chance of life all round,
for freedom, and the fun of living
bust in, and hold the ground!

Pansies, by D. H. LAWRENCE.

Correspondence

THREE FOOTNOTES

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—An amateur annotator has three comments to make upon recent contributions to the always interesting *Freethinker*.

In the issue for October 2, "Mimnermus," p. 627, col. 2, in "Our Ladies of Liberty," informs his readers that "The earliest woman speaker for Secularism was Mrs. Harriet Law." Not merely do I suggest, but I affirm, that this is not sound history. Eliza Sharples Carlile (the famous "Lady of the Rotunda"), Frances Wright (Madame D'Arusmont), and Emma Martin, were distinguished platformists long before Mrs. Law's day. I know that the term "Secularism" was invented by G. J. Holyoake, but Secularism is only practical Freethought, and the three women-pioneers I have named did precisely the same kind of work as was to be performed later by Harriet Law and the pre-Theosophical Annie Besant, and I may add, the all-but-forgotten Louisa Sampson.

An interesting piece of misinformation is in your issue for October 9, p. 653, col. 2. "Pro Reason" writes: "In the 'sixties . . . there was no alert Freethought journal like the *Freethinker* with its vigilant editor thoroughly to probe and expose mendacity." It was in the 'sixties, actually, that Holyoake's *Reasoner* (1846-1861 First Series), came to an end, and Bradlaugh's *National Reformer* (1860-1893) began. Neither Holyoake nor Bradlaugh was, I opine, lacking in vigilance. Freethought journalism goes back almost without a break for very nearly a hundred and twenty years, and never has it been lacking in either vigilance or audacity.

With delighted interest I have read Mr. C. Clayton Dove's erudite article on that forgotten Freethought classic, the *De Tribus Impostoribus*. Apparently he has not yet come across the English translation, *The Three Impostors*, a small volume, 6¾ x 4 in., containing ninety-six pages, issued by the little-known heretical publisher, J. Myles, of Dundee, in 1844. This is "Translated (with notes and illustrations) from the French Edition of the work, published at Amsterdam, 1776." I owe my copy to the kindness of Mr. A. G. Barker. The English version is extremely rare, and my own copy is the only one that I have ever seen.

Through the courtesy of Mr. H. G. Hoare and Mr. Arthur E. Dobell, some years ago I obtained a copy of the Amsterdam edition of 1776. From this I made an English version, which has not yet been published.

VICTOR B. NEUBURG.

Obituary

DEATH OF AN AUSTRALIAN FREETHINKER—W. S. FORBES

A DEATH that I deeply regret to have to chronicle is that of W. S. Forbes, which took place in Sydney (N.S.W., Australia), on September 22, at the age of 83.

Born in India, he came to Australia over 40 years ago, and one of the positions he filled for some time, before indifferent health compelled his retirement, was that of an insurance inspector—a capacity in which he was entrusted with a lot of legal work, and so acquitted himself as to earn the admiration, not only of the commercial community, but of solicitors, barristers, and judges.

Besides being a wide reader, with a meticulous regard for facts and figures, he had a dissecting, razor-like brain, the result of which was that, in a few sentences, he was able to summarily and ruthlessly expose the statements of hypocrites and humbugs—social, business, political and religious.

Especially in the religious sphere.

I once asked him how he had first come to reject Christianity. It was the result of a remark, he told me, made by an educated Indian in that country. "Do you," quietly asked the Indian, "believe in the Bible?" Mr. Forbes replied that he supposed he did. "Why?" he inquired. "Oh," said the Indian, "I think that all religions—yours as well as others—are just the same superstitious rubbish." Somehow, this appeared to define

what Mr. Forbes had been more or less vaguely feeling. At any rate, he became a more and more pronounced Freethinker from that moment.

Mr. Forbes was in indifferent health for some years before his death; but mentally he appeared to become even more alert with his advancing age.

He must have been one of Australia's oldest subscribers to the *Freethinker*. In appreciation of this fact he received from you, a few months before his death, a note stating that you would like to continue sending him a copy free of charge—an offer which, while he was by no means prepared to accept it, deeply touched him by the thoughtfulness and kindness behind it. Indeed, he regarded it as an award of merit conferred upon him as a Freethinker.

So—now he's gone!

There does not live a man—among the many who knew and admired him—who will not testify that he was the very soul of sincerity and honour; and by me, personally, he will ever be remembered as one of my dearest—most stimulating and enlightening—friends.

Sydney, N.S.W., Australia.

FRANK HILL.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

OUTDOOR

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.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common): 7.30, Mrs. C. Tamplin (The Eugenics Society)—"Voluntary Sterilization of the Unfit."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor F. Aveling, D.Sc.—"What is Psychology?"

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, Alick West—"Superstitions of To-day."

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

BLYTH (Fountain): 7.0, Monday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS: 7.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

INDOOR

IRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, Demonstration by Local speakers. "Life Through Freethought Eyes." A. E. Jones—"Prayers—and Facts." H. A. Walker—"Religious Rule in Ireland." F. G. Stevens—"In Search of the Soul."

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Assembly Hall, Market Hall, Blackburn): 7.30, Monday, Mr. Jack Clayton—"The Freethinker's Vote."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Religion in a Changing World."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 7.0, Mrs. M. Whitefield "God is God, but Business is Business."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, G. W. Tyrell, D.Sc. F.G.S., F.R.S.E.—"A Geologist in the U.S.S.R."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): 6.30, Mr. George Bedborough—"Godlessness."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Picton Hall, Liverpool): 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"The New Science and the New God." Admission free. Reserved seats 1s.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (King's Café, 64-66 Oxford Road, Manchester, near All Saints Church): 7.0, Mr. Jack Clayton (Burnley)—"What Do We Mean?"

MIDDLESBROUGH (Labour Hall, Newport Road): 7.0, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

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