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

Views and Opinions

J. B. Priestley and Life

To the examples I gave last week of the extent to which established religious teachings "muddy" thought, even with those who openly profess to have got rid altogether of religious beliefs, may be added in passing some comments on an article which appeared in the *Sunday Dispatch* for November 6. The article is written by Mr. J. B. Priestley, the subject, "When I am dead," and however much the article may serve its purpose in a newspaper which is concerned more with the circulation value of a name than with the soundness of the thinking displayed, it will certainly not enhance Mr. Priestley's reputation as a philosophic thinker. But the main idea of these newspaper articles on such subjects as Mr. Priestley writes does not appear to be either a clarification of thought, or an expression of reasoned conviction. The main purpose seems to be that of saving one's reputation as an "advanced" thinker by rejecting some very obvious absurdities in their customary historic forms, and then escaping the odium of being too heretical by reintroducing the rejected ideas in a vague and laboured exposition.

Mr. Priestley, for example, with the exception of a few flirtatory comments on Mr. J. W. Dunne's theory of Time, which, so far as I understand it, has no necessary connexion whatever with what people understand by immortality, professes no definite belief in a future life. So far he will please a certain section of the "advanced" world. But there is the rest of the world, made up of Carlyle's "Mostly's," who hold power in social circles, and these also must be considered. So what we get is a number of vague and quite unjustifiable objections to what Mr. Priestley calls "Materialism," although exactly what he means by the term only he and God knows, and I have a suspicion that there is little use in applying to the first-named for information.

Yea and Nay

Take a sample of the dish served up by Mr. Priestley. He says:—

What is called my personality is, I know, a temporary affair. I am glad of it. I should hate an immortality of J. B. Priestley. I have known him only for 44 years, but I have had enough of him already. It is not for this bunch of habits and bag of tricks that I demand immortality.

So far, good, and I am sure everyone will admire the modesty that prevents Mr. Priestley demanding of nature he shall live for ever. Mr. Priestley evidently wishes to reserve for nature the right to apologize for some of its blunders by wiping them out. Mr. Priestley thinks the bunch of habits, etc., that passes for Mr. Priestley not worth preserving. At any rate he would "hate" it, and therefore does not desire it. But now comes a problem. Mr. Priestley is represented by the bunch of habits that (shall we say?) masquerades as Mr. Priestley. There is, so far as we know, no other J.B.P. There is no other "I" or "you" distinct from bundles of habits bearing distinctive labels. If, for example, I had met a woman who was black instead of white, or if I had come across some curious non-sexed animal, it is not likely I should have married her. If I am to live again it must be I, if she is to live again it must be her. It is no use finding in the next world some "I" that is not the "I" my family and friends are acquainted with and saying that is *me*. No one, not even the recording angel would be fooled in that way. If we live again "I" must be "I" and "you" must be "you," not an unrecognizable, non-sexual, non-personal, inconceivable lump of—what? Mr. Priestley must recognize that if things change completely they are not the same. I hope that is not too abstruse a point, and I pass to another statement. This makes me wonder whether J.B.P. agrees that if things are different they are not the same; for, he says:—

There is in me, as there is in everybody, something that a few years of this life cannot possibly satisfy, and this something is easily the most important part of me. Sometimes it takes the form of vastly and oddly impersonal curiosity. At others it is a deep feeling of admiration, well-wishing, love. At others it is a terrible hunger for beauty.

We are familiar with this æsthetic pulpit pose, and it is to be noted that it is not a hunger for a good dinner, or a good game, or a good physical contest; that would be too material, and if one plans to live beyond the clouds, one must get used to a misty atmosphere.

But here's the rub. Mr. J. B. Priestley would hate the thought of immortality. Good! But the only J.B.P. we know is the J.B.P. who writes novels, and that is the only J.B.P. that J.B.P. himself knows. If I met a J.B.P. who could not write, and who had no

resemblance to J.B.P. I should not know him. Nay, J.B.P. would not in such circumstances know himself. But this J.B.P. who does not "demand" immortality (modest man!) ends with fifty or sixty years of life, how, then, can he get to the next world where he is able to indulge in orgies of love and admiration and curiosity—but no games or struggles or beautifully cooked foods or delicious wines? He simply cannot have immortality and yet end at the grave. How does the bunch of tricks that is J.B.P. satisfy his desire to end life at the grave, because he hates the idea of the immortality of that bunch of tricks, and yet remain in existence to enjoy love, and admiration, and all the other super-aesthetical qualities? I am beginning to get quite dizzy. In this respect Mr. Priestley has me at a disadvantage. He only had to write something at so much a column. There his job ended. But I have got to try and understand it, and really that wants some doing. If I dare say it, I have a notion that Mr. Priestley's long suit is neither logic nor common-sense; but in this I may be mistaken.

This further passage, again, appears to me to be an echo of familiar pulpit phrases written round a portrait of the writer sucking a pipe, with a look of one struggling with terrific problems; and it immediately follows the passage just cited:—

If I thought there was nothing in the universe that could correspond to those needs (for love, beauty, etc.), that all was a silly illusion, I would consider it a crime to have helped to bring a child into the world, would see in every birth the beginning of another hopeless tragedy.

But if longing number one, that of not being condemned to immortality is satisfied, why should, or how does, one live after death in order to indulge in this aforesaid debauch of beauty and admiration? J.B.P. ought really to make up his mind whether he will put up with the immortality of himself, which he says he would "hate," or whether he would sooner end with an earthly death, the thought of which, he says, embitters his existence and makes life a mockery. Not even Nature can gratify a man who cannot hold the same opinion about himself and his desires for the space of two newspaper paragraphs. To follow him is almost like trying to solve a crossword puzzle without an alphabet. My head would be whirling if my lips were not smiling.

* * *

An Old Story

Now let us take Mr. Priestley as a philosopher. He says:—

It has always seemed to me that Materialists do not begin to understand those of us who oppose their view.

I am afraid I cannot plead guilty to that charge. On the contrary, it is, to me, as plain as daylight that the Materialist understands J.B.P.'s view better than he understands the view of the Materialist. It does not follow that because Mr. Priestley is able to string together a few very, very old mis-statements about the Materialistic view of life, that he understands the question before him. Mr. Priestley actually *understands* neither himself nor his opponent. On the contrary, he appears to be without that equipment which should be possessed by any educated man or woman who deals with this topic. Mr. Priestley says:—

What worries me about this Materialism is that it promptly takes the sense and significance out of everything. You cheat sense and significance by saying that though the individual is doomed, we enjoy a sort of vogue immortality through the race or species. This will not do because obviously the race or species is hurrying towards final extinction.

How many thousand times has this statement been made? It is one of the commonest and cheapest expressions of unenlightened egotism and religious misunderstanding that the world holds.

To begin with, no Materialist has ever said, save as a mere figure of speech, that *we*, the individual, enjoys any sort of immortality. It is what the individual does that survives, woven into the texture of the race for good or ill. The question of whether the individual exists for ever has nothing to do with this view. Mr. Priestley does not appear to grasp the significance of this statement because his mind is clogged by early and current religious teaching. The proof that Mr. Priestley has no genuine understanding of the question at issue is contained in the already quoted sentence that Materialism "promptly takes the sense and significance out of everything." In the name of all that is sensible, or even intelligible, why? Mark, this comes from a man who is at the same time voicing some cheaply popular ravings about the glory of beauty, love, and so forth. Is love less love because the individual does not live forever? Is a flower or a sunset less beautiful because my eyes will not look at them for ever, or is the flower less perfumed because it will one day wither to destruction? It would seem the plainest of truths that things are what they are, the consequences of action will remain what they are, whether I am able to observe them, or presently cease being able to observe anything. It is said of an old French aristocrat that he set aside the consequences of the treatment of his serfs with the comment, "After me the deluge." Mr. Priestley in his intense and unenlightened egotism (I am assuming that he really understands the "sense and the significance" of what he is saying) in the same vein as this aristocrat, says, unless I live for ever there is no sense or significance in anything. And this from a man who at the same time, with an adoption of the pose of being bored by existence, says he would hate an immortality of J. B. Priestley.

* * *

A Few Facts

I trust Mr. Priestley will not think me impertinent if I venture to give him a hint as to the direction in which he should turn his thought if he has any real desire to understand the situation. The first point for him to note (I am now teaching, not arguing, because I am dealing with the basic facts of scientific investigation) is that every thing, and every quality, is in its development related to a specific environment. The shape and fragrance of flowers, the structure and functions of animals, the love between human beings—male and female, parent and child—patriotism, kindness or cruelty, admiration and curiosity, everything that one can think of has "sense and significance" only in relation to a specific environment.

If Mr. Priestley were writing a novel he would recognize this. If he did not his book would be set aside as mere rubbish. And if he transferred one of his characters, say from a Yorkshire village to the middle of the City of London, he would recognize that he must allow for the new environment and its influence on the moulding of character. A novel that does not consciously or unconsciously do this is mere rubbish.

Now a very important fact of the human environment is that of death and birth. One is the complement of the other, and it does not require a very profound thinker to realize that love rests solidly upon the fact that the individual is *not* made for eternal existence. Again, a great many of our qualities (I qualify the statement in order to make it the clearer) obviously rest upon the existence of a social environment. Patriotism, loyalty, mutual help, admiration

and so forth are clearly related to this fact. And being a novelist, Mr. Priestley should readily recognize that if he, in thought, transports the human animal into an environment where death and birth do not exist, where the individual that exists in that new environment does not resemble the individual that exists in this one, there will be a complete misfit. The qualities developed here will be of no use there. The J.B.P. that exists here cannot be the J.B.P. that exists there. So far as J.B.P. is concerned, he will cease to exist. But if the next world does resemble this, the lack of "sense and significance" will be as manifest in that imaginary world of Mr. Priestley's as it is in the real one in which he now moves.

It is the same with the fatuous statement that a few years of this life cannot possibly satisfy. Satisfaction depends entirely upon how one is built, and what one expects. If I have the stupid ambition merely to own several millions of pounds I shall not be contented with say ten thousand pounds. If I long for wings I shall not be satisfied with extra legs. But I do not believe that any man or woman has, considered by itself, a desire to live in some other world. Where a desire for more life exists it is life in this world that is the referent. The other comes in as a kind of misunderstood substitute.

The truth is that Mr. Priestley represents the common fact of a man who is still dominated by a number of very primitive ideas, and has not shaken himself sufficiently free from them to appreciate the changed world of knowledge in which we are living. He illustrates the common fact that we have tailed minds as well as tailed bodies, and that the persistence of these primitive ideas may often be found among those who consider themselves free and enlightened individuals. As I said last week, this phenomenon is to be found, not merely with those who are avowedly religious, but with those who are loudly non-religious, or even anti-religious. Mr. Priestley is a fine example of one with whom these primitive ideas linger, and who imagines that he is freed from them because they are not put in quite so primitive a form as when they appear in the pulpit. The unearthing of these half-buried absurdities is a very interesting study, and I will give more examples next week. For the moment I have to thank Mr. Priestley for having furnished me with so fine an illustration of my thesis.

CHAPMAN COHEN.

To a Chosen People

WHERE now the Teuton beast in fury strides,
Where now he blindly follows evil guides,
Where now his hapless victim he derides,
Shall come a peace:
Be sure of this,
That Justice in the heart of man abides.
Be sure of this, that there shall come a day
When Justice armed will hold the beast at bay;
If she be blind, she has a sword to slay;
It shall bring peace:
Be sure of this,
The reign of violence will pass away.
The jackals that around the wild beast pressed,
The Bonnets, Chamberlains and all the rest
Who sing the praise of Hitler with such zest,
Will hold their peace:
Be sure of this,
Justice shall reign and all our world be blessed.
The time will come, indeed is coming now,
When all the nations of the earth will bow
Before the Rule of Law, and men will vow
To live in peace:
Be sure of this,
That Justice bears this promise on her brow.

BAYARD SIMMONS.

The Valour of Voltaire

"Voltaire was a stupendous power."—John Morley.

"Who saw life steadily and saw it whole."

Matthew Arnold.

THE whole civilized world owes a deep debt to France for her continued support of intellectual liberty. French literature has been one blaze of splendid scepticism from the days of Abelard to those of Anatole France, but no man held the banner of reason higher than Voltaire. Indeed, Victor Hugo regarded Voltaire as the champion of freethought, and, in his fine, epigrammatic way, said: "Voltaire smiled, Christ wept." And that smile of Voltaire cost him dear, for none has been more hated, none more reviled by priests. The reason is not far to seek. He attacked bigotry and superstition, not in the dry fashion of professors, writing for other professors, but with wit and pleasantry which survive the winnowing of generations. He made priests appear ridiculous as well as odious, and those who felt the sting of his lash denounced him as Anti-Christ, whose writings all should avoid as they would a plague. All whose interests were bound up with Orthodoxy stigmatized Voltaire as a scoffer, railing at all things sacred.

In his own time this jaundiced view of Voltaire was very prevalent. Doctor Johnson, not at all a bad-hearted man, has voiced this prejudice. In conversation with Boswell he said, "Rousseau, sir, is a very bad man. I would sooner sign a sentence for his transportation than that of any felon who has gone from the Old Bailey these many years. Yes, I should like to have him work in the plantations." "Sir, do you think him as bad a man as Voltaire?" inquired Boswell. "Why, sir," returned the doctor, "it is difficult to settle the proportion of iniquity between them." In artistic circles one meets similar abuse. Sir Joshua Reynolds, in one of his most popular pictures, introduced Voltaire as the personification of sophistry. The clergy made Voltaire into an Aunt Sally. He was the helot of thousands of homilies, and served to point morals past counting. The priests lied so lustily and to such purpose that whole generations of stupid Christians firmly believed that Voltaire was personally responsible for the excesses of the French Revolution.

In England there is still great prejudice against Voltaire, which only sheer ignorance can excuse. The shouts of friends and foes still fill the troubled air, and the dust of controversy is blinding. One turns with relief from books about Voltaire by enemies and partisans alike to his own letters and writings. Here one finds the real man, no mere jester, but a sensitive nature, bent on the destruction of cruelty and intolerance, and striking with all his strength at the superstition of which these vices are the outcome. His keen eyes saw the barbarism entwined with Christianity. He saw it was essential that such a religion should be proved detestable and ridiculous. Men, he said, will not cease to be persecutors until they have ceased to be absurd; and, more than any other man, he caused the European world to smile at its own absurdities.

"Aye, sharpest, shrewdest steel that ever stabbed
Imposture, through the armor-joints to death."

Voltaire's motto was "Straight to the fact." He brought, smilingly, all religions to the test of truth and common-sense. Was it true or not that Omnipotence had chosen Oriental barbarians as his peculiar people? Was "God" born of a virgin? Did Jesus, indeed, ascend from the earth "like a balloon?" To ask these questions, and to cross-examine priests, was to provoke laughter. Voltaire was not a mere

mocked, but a man of serious aims. He had profound convictions, and employed his wit as a weapon. There is no case of Voltaire mocking at any men who lived good lives. He did not jibe at the English Quakers, but he was merciless when he attacked the murderous priests of France, who invoked the laws to destroy their opponents. A Protestant pastor, Rochette, was hanged for merely exercising his functions in Languedoc. The Protestant, Calas, was broken on the wheel because his son was found dead, and someone said that the father had killed him to prevent him turning Catholic. Even women and children were not spared. Calas's widow and children were put to the torture. La Barre, a lad of eighteen, was condemned on the charge of mutilating a crucifix, to have his tongue and right hand cut off, and then be burnt alive, a sentence which was commuted to decapitation. It was Voltaire, the Freethinker, who exposed these judicial murders. "This is the country of the St. Bartholomew massacre," he burst out. The whole man kindled into a blaze of indignation to destroy such infamies. It was another Freethinker, Émile Zola, who did similar service to the poor Jew, Alfred Dreyfus. Such things will never fade from the memory of men, for they add to the glory and dignity of mankind.

Voltaire was well equipped for his battle with Priestcraft. A perfect master of language, he wrote with the ease with which a bird trills out his song. His versatility was marvellous. "Monsieur Multi-form" was his witty name for D'Alembert, and he himself had an equal right to it. In the eighty volumes of his collected writings, he has excelled as historian, poet, essayist, thinker, humorist, tale-teller, letter-writer, and critic. So fascinating has been his appeal to literary men that there is a Voltairean tradition in style. Macaulay, one of the most omnivorous of readers, selected Voltaire's works for his reading on his lengthy sea-voyage to India.

Among Voltaire's works *Candide* is the most characteristic. It is also the wittiest book in the world. Nowhere has he displayed to such advantage his extraordinary genius. The news of the awful horrors of the dreadful earthquake at Lisbon, in which 40,000 people lost their lives, roused Voltaire like a blow in the face. He cast his protest in a masterpiece amongst masterpieces. He brought out all his batteries at once, and he faced the foe and withered the cheap, current, convenient optimism. Yet Voltaire himself was actually sixty-four years of age when he wrote it; a time when most men are dreaming of slipped ease. The story of *Candide* is, briefly, that of a young man brought up in the belief that this is the best of all possible worlds. He meets with a hundred adventures, each of which gives it the lie direct. Life is a doubtful bargain, but one can make the best of it. That is the moral of *Candide*, that is the verdict of a very remarkable man. "What I know," says *Candide*, "is that we must cultivate our garden." The advice has become proverbial in many languages. In the last resort, "with close-lipped patience for our only friend," be it remembered that Voltaire's philosophy was Secularistic.

Voltaire was an apostle of sanity, of clear thinking. In this he resembled Socrates, and no one can pay him greater tribute. His swift, live brain anticipated modern thought. In an ignorant age he accepted the view of man's savage origin. He derived the belief in ghosts from dreams, and discerned the admixture of magic with early religions. He even stated the population question; and saw through the central myths of the Christian Bible in a pre-scientific age.

For sixty years Voltaire waged unending war against Priestcraft, and when he died the clergy refused him burial, hoping that he would be thrown

into the gutter like the famous actress, Adrienne Lecouvrier. But he had carved his name too deeply on his country's roll of honour, and his remains now rest beneath the dome of the Pantheon, the facade of which glows with the splendid words:—

"Aux grands hommes la patrie reconnaissante."

Here he sleeps undisturbed by priests, and by his side rests the ashes of Rousseau. Shoulder to shoulder, these great soldiers of the Army of Human Emancipation rest in their magnificent tombs:—

"With the sound of those they wrought for,
And the feet of those they fought for,
Echoing round their tombs for evermore."

MIMNERMUS.

"The Catholic Herald" and the Ninth Commandment

In the issue of the *Catholic Herald* of September 23, on p. 3, is an article which is typical of the religious attitude towards the moral code of Christianity.

In May last Professor G. E. G. Catlin was invited to join the Committee of Honour of the International Freethought Congress to take place in September, 1938. He assented, with one condition. This was in his own words, "that I am correctly informed about the nature of the Russian delegation," which, he had been told, was "for the repression of all other views save these of Lenin's within the Communist Party in Russia." The Professor was given such a reply that he wrote on June 1, thanking me for the "very full and frank explanation." Towards the end of July he wrote saying that he wished to attend the Congress Dinner on September 12.

A Catholic journalist apparently attacked Prof. Catlin for supporting Communists by lending his name to the Committee of Honour of the Congress, and the Professor, wishful to make his situation clear, sent a copy of the letter of invitation and one of his answer to the *Catholic Herald*.

Lo, here a miracle! The Professor's letter underwent a remarkable metamorphosis. "THE MAN WHO INDICTED ATHEIST CONGRESS IS PUT ON GODLESS COMMITTEE OF HONOUR," is the heading given to the *Catholic Herald* article. This includes three false statements. Firstly Professor Catlin had not "indicted" the Congress. Secondly, the Congress was not an "Atheist" one, and thirdly the Committee of Honour was not "Godless," save in so far as there were no deities invited to join it.

In the second sentence of this article, one in capitals, it is said that the Professor "completely boycotted" the Congress. If to write saying that he looks forward "with great pleasure to being present at your Dinner on the 12th, at 6.30 p.m.," is a complete boycott, the word has changed its meaning recently. The statement looks more like a complete "Catholic truth."

The *Catholic Herald's* fourth sentence runs: "He (Professor Catlin) has explained he cannot consider as a free-thinking meeting, one which he understands is planned to repress all opinions other than those of Lenin." Professor Catlin never wrote me anything of the sort. This was a double-barrelled inexactitude. Not only were words given to the Professor which he did not use, but the implication was that the Congress was planned to repress all opinions other than those of Lenin. That was why we had in our Manifesto the paragraph declaring that the World Union "is the enemy of all totalitarianism," why we had statements such as these made at the Congress,

"the present abominations in Germany, Italy and Russia are perpetrated, not in the name of God, but in the name of the State" (H. W. Nevins): "the imposition of an official orthodoxy is always a menace, whether the orthodoxy be Christian or Hindu, Communist or Nazi" (Dr. Julian Huxley); and many others in the same vein. The Congress was free-thinking and free-speaking. The only demand made for co-operation with Catholics came from the Russian Union of Militant Atheists (!)

The *Catholic Herald* goes on to declare that "a short reply" was sent to the Professor, who was "not at all satisfied"; that was why he wrote, on June 1, thanking me for the "very full and frank explanation." What a shocking distortion this Catholic paper serves up in place of the truth, this journal, which claims in its headlines to "Give Reliable Information," and "To Set Forth Sound Christian Principles of Life" (The Aims for which Pius XI. Blessed the *Catholic Herald*).

In the table of contents on page 1 this article is referred to thus "How the Godless got supporters. Professor reveals the truth."

Professor Catlin had in the meantime gone to New York. When the matter was brought to his notice he sent me a letter to be published in the "*Herald*," correcting the deliberate misrepresentation of his correspondence. This was incorporated in a brief letter to the Editor and sent on October 18. It brought back this reply:—

Many thanks for your letter of October 18. What we published on September 16 (23) was only the correspondence sent us by Professor Catlin, together with very short comments quite naturally arising from it.

I don't feel that I should publish Professor Catlin's letter to yourself just because you sent it to me. I am, however, perfectly willing to publish anything sent by Professor Catlin himself to the *Catholic Herald*.

Yours truly,

M. DE LA BÉDOYÈRE.

A copy of this was sent on to the Professor, who replied stating his readiness to ask for my letter to be inserted in the *Catholic Herald*.

It is to be noted that the Editor found the "short comments quite naturally arising from it," when not one of the comments was a truthful one.

C. BRADLAUGH BONNER.

Beliefs—Hot and Cold

A FRIEND of long standing, and an excellent friend withal, complains of my *cold* belief. I do not feel it to be chilly, and I have not felt Christian beliefs, in any of their metamorphoses, to be particularly warm, unless there are, indeed, radiations to be picked up from a belief in a hot Hell. But is it meant that a belief is to be given house room because of its comforting qualities? We may be influenced in the choice of an hotel because we see it advertises *Water, h. & c., in bedrooms*. Pity it is that so many pick a belief on precisely the same basis. They want a comforting belief—Christianity is h., Secularism is c. So they choose the h. item as the suitable belief for them.

The belief, however, that it is hot on the top of Mount Everest does not make it hot there. The belief that it is cold, does not make it cold there. There is even a strong *common-sense* argument that it must be warmer on the summit of Everest than it is on a lower plane because it is nearer the sun. It is cold at the top of Mount Everest all the same. So

mountain climbers look facts in the face, and, when they intend climbing, see to it that they increase their amount of clothing. They find comfort in facing the facts, and much more than one kind of comfort. There are, strange though it may appear to some, people in the world who derive comfort in proportion to their loyalty to the facts. The chilliest of beliefs to them is that one that has been allowed house-room because it comforts, but of which one is not quite sure as to its validity. One often seeks the multitude in such cases, and hides oneself in the middle of them. There is much comfort in the kindly chorus. But there comes the moment when one is alone and one realizes that one has been picking a belief in the same way as one picks a nosegay. *Is it not beautiful?* Yes, there is such a thing as a beautiful nosegay. Even the secularist may appreciate a beautiful thing. He tries, in fact, to bring more nosegays into the business of living. He knows that with nosegays circulating there goes a better disposition; people are more inclined to put themselves into the other man's place, they show less inclination to fight, to rob, to lie, in order that they shall have the nosegays and other people have none.

The persons who confine their activities to this world and do not bother about their souls, are as little inclined as anyone to exaggerate the value of being alive. They see quite plainly the doubtful blessing life is. They see, however, much more than that. They see its potentialities. They see warmth in human life, and would extend it. They see brutality and would counter it. They see injustice and would replace it by justice. A slow job, perhaps, but a job which, whatever it appear to the pious, is capable of inducing a glow. Religionists can get a glow, so they tell us, by contemplating their immortal souls. For them a good time is coming—a good time when they are dead—and they glow in anticipation. Well, belief in this good time will not make it, and the more people there are who grow warm by contemplating the route through the theological maze into the Gorgeous Summerland, the colder and colder it gets for this poor planet of ours.

Why should a person who has got his soul in order bother about this vale of tears? He is sure he has backed the winning sect? True, he doesn't care much for his brother who tells him he has got into the wrong bus. He often, indeed, tries to hit this brother very hard on the head. You see it is such an important matter which is the correct bus. Those who have cold beliefs look round and marvel at the warmth our religious friends can generate in trying to exterminate those who serve up what they consider a wrong prescription for the soul. O, Happy Household of Faith!

Let the believer divest himself of his Happy Land Above just for one moment and confine his considerations to here and now. What is there of fire in this world that the secularist cannot equally derive comfort from?

The world remains with its winters and homes and firesides, where grow and bloom the virtues of our race. All these are left; and music, with its sad and thrilling voice, and all there is of art and song and hope and love and aspiration high. All these remain.

Yes, replies the Christian, but what about Malice and Envy, Injustice and Intolerance? Disease in its myriads of forms bringing desolation to hundreds of thousands of homes, Poverty which causes frail bodies and, still worse, sadness and bitterness of spirit? Selfish people, who think the main end of existence is to have the ability to eat cake, to wear costly raiment, and to "show off," though countless thousands mourn? What about our Modern Torque-

madras? What about those who would trade on relative ignorance and defend their profits as their prescriptive right? *It is a cold world.* There is no hope in it, and you would make it unbearable by taking away the bright day which is coming.

One remembers some of those without souls, who did not believe that the world was a picnic, but believed, all the same, that we should cultivate our garden; who believed that we should spend time in pulling up some of the weeds. One remembers Voltaire who tweaked Imposture by the beard, who looked for Injustice, and fought it, whenever he found a concrete case;¹ one remembers Zola,² who flung himself into a fight against the Infamous Things of the Earth, in his battle for the persecuted Jew, Dreyfus; one remembers Ronald Ross in this world of "comfort," spending his years hunting out the Malaria bacillus and obtaining honour without bread. One remembers the unbelieving Curies intent on their discovery of radium. One remembers Colonel Ingersoll, whose life was a thing of beauty, and who did his share towards devising a technique of living, quite content to let his soul take its chance. He sought from life "sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not."

Something of warmth surely had these people? Something of warmth, surely, they have generated in others? And if life is not worth living, if this life end all, what are we going to do about it? Can we not find sufficient live coals here at which we can warm our hands? Is not life something warmer and richer to-day because of the efforts of those who have looked at it, seen its troubles, and tried to mitigate them? *Jam to-morrow* never brought into existence the purring of a kitten, the smile of happy recognition on the face of a friend. *Jam to-morrow* never set a broken limb. What is good, what is warm, in this world, is of the earth, earthy. It can be a better earth, a warmer clime, if we only throw aside narcotics, and concentrate on the Here and Now. There is something of inspiration in this as well; although it may possibly surprise the soulful.

T. H. ELSTON.

¹ On Voltaire's tomb in the Pantheon appears but one phrase to commemorate this remarkable man: *He defended Calas, Sirven, de la Barre, Montbailly.* To those who would consider this epitaph inapt, we would say: Look around!

² "In him lived for a moment the conscience of humanity." *Anatole France.*

Religion and the Industrial Revolution in England

I.—THE OPIUM DEALERS

RELIGIOUS ideas, like all other ideas, do not drop, manna-like from heaven. They are part of the ideological complement of definite social and economic systems; they change as the system changes, flourishing or decaying, or taking on strange, warped forms, as they seek to adapt themselves to changing circumstances—much as the gorse has evolved from a trefoil-bearing, unarmed plant, into a prickly bush, or deep-set creatures have lost their eyes from lack of need and use of sight, and plant-lice are the descendants of higher insects which have degenerated to their present low level through the excessive abundance of their food. Perhaps no period of history more aptly illustrates these remarks than those years covered by the Industrial Revolution in England—say from 1760 to 1832. J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond, in their trilogy of valuable books dealing with that

period give a host of illustrative facts, a few of which I should like to quote in this paper.

Let us divide our inquiry into the religion of the period, into two parts. First let us consider how it was used as "the opium of the working-class"—as the Bolsheviks have very aptly termed it—and second how the dreadful industrial conditions which the Revolution brought into existence fostered and moulded the growth of Methodism.

For an account of the hideous conditions under which the industrial population existed during this period, I must refer you to any work on Industrial History: the whole of my space might easily be given to the description, were I to essay the task of describing those conditions. Suffice it must, to say that the men, women, and children of the working-class led lives of dull, dreary, drudgery, ill-clad, under-fed, and denied all the higher æsthetic and intellectual amenities of life—lives compared to which the existence of a slave in Imperial Rome must have been beatific. Small wonder, then, that with the ideas of liberty and equality that the French Revolution had just loosed upon an astounded and angry world of cultured, easy-living leisured class that they should see to it that one of the prime lessons that religion taught was that of subordination and discipline. "The rich and poor were equal in the sight of God, but the effective recognition of equality was to come in another world. In this world the poor were not to presume on that principle: they were to learn patience and gratitude. The Evangelical religion made a special feature of gratitude. Wilberforce* used to carry about, for use in meditation and prayer, a list of advantages for which he owed gratitude to Providence, such as his rank in life, his parents, his home, and in particular his good fortune in being born in the country and age that combined the greatest measure of temporal comforts and of spiritual privileges . . . the philanthropy of the rich, like the political economy of the day, helped to reconcile the conscience of the upper classes to a servile standard for the poor. For resignation was the message of religion . . ." (*The Town Labourer, 1760-1832*, J. L. Hammond and Barbara Hammond).

Nowhere is this attitude more clearly indicated than in the writings of Hannah More (17745-1833). "In the year 1789 Wilberforce was taken to see the famous Cheddar cliffs, but the beauties of nature were quite overshadowed in his mind by the poverty and squalor that he encountered in the neighbourhood. On his return he urged the sisters More to attempt the moral reclamation of the district, and they took up the task with great fervour and determination. They started Sunday-schools and Women's Benefit Clubs in several villages. These they managed despotically, and they used to pay periodical visits to see that their teachers and pupils had not lapsed from virtue and Bible reading, and to address the villages in a series of charges. . . .

"The conditions of these villages was such that one of them was popularly known as Botany Bay or Little Hell. In one place Hannah More mentions that the wages are a shilling a day; in another that two hundred people are crammed into nineteen hovels. Of another parish she writes: I will only add that we have one large parish of miners so poor that there is not one creature in it that can give a cup of broth if it would save a life. Of course, they have nothing human to look to but us. The clergyman, a poor saint, told me, when we set up our schools there twenty-five years ago, that eighteen had perished that winter of a putrid fever, and he could not raise a sixpence to save a life. Nowhere perhaps was there a better illustration of the

* Wilberforce, of course, played a great part in the abolition of slavery.

great process described in this volume, the exploitation, that is, of the mass of a race by the classes holding economic and political power. Now the sisters More were benevolent women, who put themselves to great trouble and discomfort out of pity for these villages, and yet from beginning to end of the *Mendip Annals* there is not a single reflection on the persons or system responsible for these conditions. It never seems to have crossed the minds of these philanthropists that it was desirable that men and women should have decent wages, or decent homes, or that there was something wrong with the arrangements of a society that left the mass of the people in this plight. This is their comment on the overcrowded glass workers in the nineteenth hovels: 'Both sexes and all ages herding together: voluptuous beyond belief. The work of a glass-house is an irregular thing, uncertain, whether by day or by night: not only infringing upon man's rest, but constantly intruding upon the privileges of the Sabbath. The wages high, the eating and drinking luxurious—the body scarcely covered, but fed with dainties of a shameful description. The high building of the glass-houses ranged before the doors of these cottages—the great furnaces roaring—the swearing, eating and drinking of these half-dressed, black-looking beings gave it a most infernal and horrible appearance. One, if not two, joints of the finest, meat were roasting in each of these little hot kitchens, pots of ale standing about, and plenty of early delicate-looking vegetables.' Thus the guilty in this scheme of civilization are not the persons who neglect to provide the decencies of life, and housing and education for the men and women by whose labour they become rich, but the voluptuous glass-workers who feed their bodies on shameful dainties and enjoy delicate-looking vegetables and joints of the finest meat. The employers and gentry are sometimes blamed, it is true, in these pages, but they are only blamed for their want of sympathy with the efforts of the More sisters to teach religion. They are nowhere blamed for ill-treating their dependants, or told that they have any duties to them except the duty of encouraging them to listen to Hannah More on the importance of obedience, and on the claims to their regard and gratitude of a Providence that had lavished such attention upon them." (*Ibid*).

Another passage in *The Mendip Annals: A Narrative of the Charitable Labours of Hannah and Martha More*, refers to the parish of Blagdon, where a woman was "condemned to death for attempting to begin a riot and purloining some butter from a man who offered it for sale at a price they thought unreasonable." The churchwarden and overseer of the parish invited the two sisters to found a Sunday-school there; which they did, with "the gratifying result" as the Hammonds scathingly comment, "that they were able to report a few months later that many of the pupils 'understood tolerably well the first twenty chapters of Genesis.'" Neither of the devout couple have any comment to make concerning the barbaric sentence which gave them this opportunity of still further spreading themselves, and "uplifting" the masses. But, it would be unfair to them to suspect them of being deliberate humbugs. They were simply the victims of a perverted set of ideas.

W. H. MORRIS.

(To be concluded)

Acid Drops

On November 9, Mr. Chamberlain, speaking at the Lord Mayor's banquet, said that we could all settle down to a peaceful and happy Christmas. This peaceful and happy time was made possible by the semi-secret agreement with Hitler at Munich. It depended also upon Mr. Chamberlain's child-like confidence in Hitler's honesty, truthfulness, and a genuine desire for a *real* peace. But less than forty-eight hours after the delivery of Mr. Chamberlain's praise of his own efforts, Hitler and his mob crossed the t's and dotted the i's of the Guildhall speech. And the annotation is such that it has roused a cry of horror throughout the civilized world—we except some of the members of the Cabinet, the German-fed British Fascists, and similar products of decadence. Their anxiety to keep some form of Fascism in existence is plain to all impartial observers.

Consider the situation. A Jewish lad of 17, driven desperate by the ill-treatment of his parents by the Nazis, shot and killed, in Paris, a German official. Before the death of the official the Hitler gang publicly proclaimed that, should the wounded man die reprisals would be made upon the whole of the 600,000 Jews in Germany. The official died and the German Government kept its promise in the only direction in which one may count on it doing so—by an exhibition of a planned robbery, outrage, and arson such as the modern world has never before seen. The accounts in the newspapers, not by any means exhaustive in their scope—we except such papers as the *Evening News*, the *Sunday Dispatch*, the *Daily Mail*, the *Observer*, and other supporters of Fascism, which have been strikingly subdued in their comments on the outrage—have made known what has occurred. 600,000 Jews have had their homes invaded, their shops looted, some beaten to death, many thousands carted off to prison, large numbers have simply "disappeared," and in one day in Vienna, 20 Jews committed suicide.

One need not pile up the horrors. The "Pogrom" was carefully arranged. One of the Nazi gang of degenerates, Goebbels, has denied that the outrage was more than the spontaneous indignation of the mob—his own words were "justifiable and righteous indignation of the German people." "Spontaneous," when reprisals were threatened before the official died. When the sadistic orgy of brutality and robbery broke out in most of the towns in Germany at the same hour, were conducted in the same way at every place, with the police standing by watching the riot of robbery and ill-treatment, and when Hitler had only two or three days before said that there was only one opinion in Germany—his, and that the whole of the German people were solidly with him, and when not a word of condemnation had been heard from any of the rulers of Germany! None but Mr. Chamberlain, who has publicly professed his trust in Hitler's honesty and truthfulness, can even pretend to swallow that lie.

Even this is not the end. Since it has been officially decreed that hereafter no Jew is to be permitted to engage in trade or commerce in Germany, and, moreover, if any agitation for the better treatment of the Jews in Germany is carried on in other countries, the whole 600,000 of German Jews will suffer for it. That is strictly acting up to the Fascist rule in both Italy and Germany, where parents are imprisoned and ill-treated because their children have escaped the terror, and children because their parents have escaped. We sincerely hope that this advice will be ignored. The Jews in Germany cannot be treated worse than is at present the case, and if the Jews are massacred wholesale that would be an act of kindness compared with their continuing to live under such a rule. A general massacre would be an act of humanity compared with living the life of degradation and slow torture to which the brutes who rule Germany have condemned all the German Jews. There is neither profit nor dignity in living under certain conditions.

Lo, how a man ought to take heed, lest he overweeningly follow vulgar opinions, which should be measured by the rule of reason and not by common report.

Montaigne.

Russia, in the bad old days, had its occasional pogroms. But these were occasional, and when over there were periods of rest. But for cold-blooded, calculated brutality, the world has seen nothing to compare with the conduct of these semi-insane criminals who rule the German people. It is useless saying that it is not our business how Germany treats its people. It is everybody's business when such an outrage on human decency is committed. We recall that in the case of one of the Russian pogroms—Kishniev, we think, the British Government entered a protest to the Russian Government. Is it quite outside our interests to make some sort of a protest to Germany? Even Mr. Chamberlain should find his faith in Hitler a little weak after what has happened, and Lord Halifax might forego his hunting jaunts with Goering. Or why not turn a few hundred Jews loose in Germany and let Lord Halifax and other British admirers of Hitler rule, hunt them instead of harmless animals? It would at least show some kind of moral courage, even though it was the kind of moral courage illustrated by unashamed and undiluted villainy.

Only a few days ago some of our newspapers were "kiteflying" in the form of a suggestion that Goering might pay a semi-official visit to London. We hope that our "righteous and justifiable indignation" will prevent that being done, and that even the promise that all is right because we have "peace," a Chamberlain-Hitler-Peace, may be too dearly punished. Or if Goering, why not Goebbels and Hitler and Streicher, we may as well swallow the whole dose while we are about it. We see it reported that a protest has been made to Berlin on the filthy abuse heaped by Hitler on Eden and Churchill. We hope that has been done *very* respectfully, and that in no way have the delicate feelings of Goering and Hitler been hurt. After doing so much for Hitler, it would be a pity to undo what has been done by protesting against Eden and Churchill being bracketed as warmongers engaged in an international Jewish plot against Germany.

As we said two or three weeks ago, the one rule for every British subject who has a genuine detestation of villainy and cold blooded brutality, is that no kind of friendly intercourse with Germany should be maintained while the present kind of rule continues. One cannot moralize a bully by submission, or satisfy a blackmailer by paying instalments. If the German people are kept in ignorance as to the real state of opinion in England, it is useless depending upon visits of politicians who say nothing against German rule, who profess their admiration for and trust in German leaders, and so leave the *people* with an altogether false idea of the situation. Already there is a growing number of people in Germany who are dissatisfied with the Hitler rule. That number would have been very considerably augmented had Hitler's bluff been called, or if his generals had been foolish enough to permit him to go to war. But now that this has been altered and Hitler given control over the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, the remaining method—unless Hitler being now in a stronger position than ever he was, forces war on Europe—is to make the German people realize by our conduct and the conduct of others, that there is a limit to the brutality and robbery and assassination that the world will stand without showing at least its moral disgust.

But after all why should anyone be surprised at these murderous outrages in Germany? No one, but Mr. Chamberlain ought to be surprised, and his childlike confidence in Hitler and his gang is one of the bright spots on a dark outlook. But what this gang is doing in Germany now is only in line with what it has done ever since it achieved power. It began its career by setting fire to its own House of Parliament, in order to find an excuse for killing and torturing Socialists, Freethinkers and Communists. Thalemann, the leader of the Communists, has been in prison for over five years without being brought to trial. Over five years of slow torture. The Chancellor of an independent nation, Austria, is

lying in prison, without trial, charged with not obeying orders issued by Hitler, head of another State. The assassins of Dolfuss are canonized as martyrs. Horst Weisel, plainly a sexual degenerate of a marked criminal type, has also been canonized and made the theme of a national hymn. Since the establishment of Hitler its history has been one long record of murder, assassination, arson, lying, robbery and outrage, such as no other country the world has known can produce. Why then be surprized at this wholesale robbery and torture of the Jews? It is in line with the Nazi record. And only our innocent Mr. Chamberlain still insists that Hitler is a gentleman whose word may be taken, and who has no ill-will towards England—so long as we do not elect a Government of which he disapproves, and so long as he is so busily engaged in gobbling up other small nations, that it would be dangerous for him openly to attack this country.

By way of retort to British criticism of the German brutality, German papers are offering a "compromise." They are printing accounts of British misdeeds in all parts of the world, but offer to cease if English papers cease exposing them. This means, "If you stop lying about us or exposing us, we will stop lying about, or exposing, you." We should not be surprised if the compromise is accepted.

No one will question the ability of General Smuts. The greater pity it is that he should mix wise observation with quite foolish religious observations. In a recent broadcast on the "Crisis," he said that we had been very near the abyss of war, but by "God's mercy" we had been saved. What a pity it is that God's mercy did not operate by preventing us getting so near the "abyss." It reminds one of a brute of a man holding a child over an open furnace, and after frightening it nearly to death putting it back on the ground. Such mercy would have secured any human being a term of imprisonment. General Smuts also thinks that Mr. Chamberlain had been "providentially guided" in his "peace pact." As the guidance consisted in giving Hitler all he wanted, and at the same time asking him to consider what else he required, it hardly needed "Providence" to get this end. Any House of Commons official might have done as well.

The Religious Film Society advertises the exhibition of a film depicting the Life (and Death) of Jesus Christ (at Besant Hall of all places). It is called WHY PALESTINE? Not having seen the film we do not know the R.F.S.'s answer, if any, to their own question. We can only guess that it was because Palestine never was a civilized land, it was always the scene of bloody warfare, it had no libraries, no universities, and very inferior supplies of "milk and honey." It was just the sort of soil where one would expect deities to be born (and flourish on the local ignorant fanaticism and credulity).

Czecho Freethinkers' Relief Fund

Previously acknowledged, £78 8s. 7d.; R. B. Harrison, 7s.; F. Kenyon, 5s.; A. H. Deacon, 5s.; Thos. Owen, 5s.; F. P. Corrigan, £1; P. Ellis Lyons, 10s.; Manchester N.S.S. Branch Collection, £1 13s. 9d.; W. J. Pringle, £1 1s.; A. Thomas, 1s.; per Kingston N.S.S. Branch Collection, £1 10s.; J. W. Barker, 10s.; W. Griffiths, 5s.; R. S. Skan, 10s.; W. Nelson, £5; Islay Freethinker, 5s.; E. Grant, 5s.; E. O. D. Stalker, £5; P. O'Dee, 5s.; W. A. Hoole, £1 1s.; H. Stockton, 5s.; C. H. Drewry, £1 1s.; Mr. and Mrs. C. Potter, 3s.; Alec Potter (their son), 2s.; John Hayes, 5s.; T. Borland, 10s.; F. E. Porter, £5; J. McCartney, 10s.; R. Daniell, 2s. 6d.; S. R. Baulkes, 10s. Total: £106 15s. 10d.

We shall be obliged, if there is any inaccuracy in the above list, or if any subscription is not acknowledged, if those concerned will write at once.

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TO CORRESPONDENTS.

To Advertising and Distributing the *Freethinker*.—Thos. Owen, 5s.

MR. G. S. SMELTERS writes from Riga (Latvia), after reading our twelve *Pamphlets for the People*, "I can't help sending you my unreserved congratulations on your having done the job so admirably. They are little masterpieces; honest, persuasive, scientific thinking." Thanks; we hope to add more to the list shortly.

A. W. CANNINGS.—We have had many letters commending the advice given recently in the notes on "The Force of Social Coercion," with suggestions as to its reprinting as a leaflet. But more than a leaflet would be required if the idea was put in permanent form, and we have no time for extra work at present. But we cannot go to war with every country whose Government behaves in a criminal manner. We can, however, refuse to affront human decency by pretending to be on terms of *friendship* with it or professing a belief that the Government of such a country has our respect, or that we place reliance upon frequently exposed liars.

JAMES A. LANGTON.—At 82 your writing is wonderfully decisive in form and expression. Freethought has reason to be proud of its veterans.

F. TRETZE.—There is no such organization in this country similar to the one you name.

J. HUMPHREYS AND M. HOOLE.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.

A. B. PECK.—We have something in print about the matter. But you are mistaken in thinking that newspapers are published for "circulation among sensible folk." They are published for circulation, and as there are more fools than sensible folk about, the papers naturally cater for the majority. No paper could reach a million or so circulation if it were published wholly for sensible folk.

H. STOCKTON.—Pleased to have the appreciation of one of the younger members of the N.S.S. It is with the younger generation that the future of every movement rests.

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

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

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.

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

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

Superstition, folly, and cunning will go on to the end of time, spinning their poison webs around the consciences of mankind. Courage and veracity—these qualities and only these—avail to defeat them.—J. A. Froude.

Sugar Plums

Mr. Cohen had a capital audience at Leicester, attentive, interested and highly appreciative. There were a few questions, and then Mr. Cohen made a dash for, and caught, the return train to London. He is now taking a fortnight's lecturing rest, in order to placate the ferocity of his friends, who are insisting on his taking more rest. It means he will be busy at home instead of abroad. Mr. Cohen's next lecture will be at Edinburgh, on December 4.

Our Czech Freethinkers' Relief Fund is mounting, and would have been greater than it is but for the fact that many of the subscribers have already contributed to other funds. And there is still the contribution of the Secular Society to come. Mr. McCartney, in sending his ros. subscription says, that in sending it he feels "a ten-shilling better man." That is the expression of a man who, whether he knows it or not, realizes the greatest pleasure we have, that of giving to someone or to some cause that is worthy of the giving. The old Eastern maxim, far greater than anything the New Testament contains, has it:—

All I had I spent,
All I saved I lost,
All I gave I have.

We should like to see this fund closed by the end of the month.

Armistice Day has come and gone, and there has been much of the usual talk which has by now become almost a habit. Those who lost relatives or friends in the "great war" think of them, as they are bound to do, with a pain that becomes gradually less, but, let us hope, with no weakening of affection for the dead. But this affection, where it exists, needs no artificial stimulant to keep it alive, if it did, the best thing would be to let it die. With genuine affection for the dead, no formal profession of grief is necessary. There is needed no special day of remembrance for our dead while memory is always with us, and the suggestion that we need a special day for it is an insult to the living and the dead.

But if we leave the dead out of this personal relationship and make it a national one, then we are faced with a different situation. The dead gave their lives—for what? To end war, to put an end to the plotting and planning of megalomaniac statesmen, to end secret treaties by which statesmen pledged the life and happiness of hundreds of thousands, to make the world safe for democracy, to make this country and the world fit for heroes to live in, to preserve freedom of speech and thought and publication. Well what has been achieved? There is not more freedom, thought and speech, there is less. There is not less tyranny, but more. There has been no cessation of war, but more war than in any twenty years for at least a century before the Armistice. There is not less dictatorship, but more, even in this country. There are not fewer secret treaties made, but more. There is not a single thing for which the Great War was ostensibly fought that has been gained. So if we must keep Armistice Day, let us at least make capital out of our blunders, and let us place over the Cenotaph the inscription:—

These men whose death this monument registers died for a noble ideal, but they died in vain. Not one of the things for which they died has been realized. The evils against which they fought have been intensified. Let us see to it that we act with greater wisdom in the future than we have in the past. It is not yet too late to turn their defeat into a triumph.

At the Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane, Birkenhead, Mr. R. H. Rosetti will speak this evening (November 20) on "Christianity and the Growth of Militarism." The subject is attractive, and should induce the local saints to bring orthodox friends to the meeting, which commences at 7 o'clock.

Our suggestion of October 30, that Germany and Germans should be subjected to a social ostracism, while still maintaining correct relations with both Germany and Germans, has brought us a large number of letters of approval, and we notice that the same advice is now beginning to show itself in some newspapers. One paper remarks that the moral boycott would be far more effective than the economic one, and with that we agree. An economic boycott, though it may be useful, has yet an element in it that spurs to resistance. A moral and social boycott is calculated to awaken a spirit of self-examination. So long as our public men go on professing great admiration for the German people, for its leaders, so long as our Cabinet Ministers hob-nob with persons such as Goering and Goebbels, and profess confidence and trust in Hitler, with loud praise of all he has done for Germany, so long the German people—who are permitted to know the things named, and nothing else—will remain unconscious of how much the very name of Germany is beginning to stink in the nostrils of decent-minded men and women.

The Secretary of the local Labour Party has written to the *Romford Times*, protesting that it is no part of the policy of the Labour Party to interfere in the matter of opening Cinemas on Sunday. It is only true of some members of the Labour Party to say that they supported the Act arranging for Cinemas to be open on Sunday. Others took an opposite view. It would have been all right if the Secretary had stopped there, but he went on to explain things, and that is a very dangerous thing in some circumstances. He says the Labour Parties consider that "questions such as Sunday Cinemas should be left to the individual for no political party has the right to interfere with the dictates of a person's conscience."

We agree. But it was precisely because the law, the Christian-made law, prevented the individual doing as he pleased that the Sunday Entertainment Act became necessary. The old law said that these Sunday Entertainments should not be permitted, and that was an interference with the freedom of those who did not hold such narrow views. The new Act did not say that one must go to the Cinema, it merely said that those who wished to go should not be prevented going. It was the Sabbatarians who said that because they did not believe in going to the Cinema on Sunday no one else should go. That was not leaving the matter to the individual, it was permitting one set of individuals to tyrannize over others. If the Labour Party really believed that the question of Sunday cinemas should be left to the individual, it should have supported the Act. Those who did not support it were really saying they did not believe in the individual doing as he pleased. If the Secretary had said that the Labour Party did not support the Bill because they were afraid of offending Sabbatarians and losing votes he would have told the truth. But he blundered into explaining, and that, we repeat, is dangerous. The best policy when you are not acting on any principle, but not actuated by not too noble motives, is to say as little as possible. The Secretary has blundered.

Another vile act, almost a crime, has been committed by Russia, which will justify Mr. Chamberlain in having slung Russia out of the conversations when he made his famous "peace" with Hitler. The *Catholic Herald*, as an example of what villainy Godless Russia can be guilty of, reprints from a Russian anti-religious paper the following note to Shakespeare's play of *Measure for Measure*:—

This play by Shakespeare exposes the bigotry of the clergy, the cruelty of the Christian religion, and the subservience of the Church to the feudal Lords.

Horrible!!! Can one wonder at Mr. Chamberlain, in the course of the Munich pact, declined to associate with a people capable of such unbelievable villainy as this?

The Reminiscences of a Free-thinking Reformer

IN 1921, the humanitarian reformer, Mr. H. S. Salt published his *Seventy Years Among Savages* (Allen and Unwin). But one must not infer from the title of this fascinating volume that the author had spent his life among untutored tribes, as the savages in question are our cultured and superior selves, while the numerous instances of barbarism, fatuity and prejudice recorded in its pages awaken wonder at the supercilious complacency with which the average European plumes himself on his remoteness from uncivilized mankind.

On reperusal Salt's reminiscences and reflections seem as fresh as ever. As schoolmaster, humanist, Freethinker and social reformer our author naturally became familiar with many choice spirits who were eminent in advanced circles in their day. His autobiography therefore remains permanently important to the Rationalist reader.

Eton College in Salt's time recalls the line:—

"There are our young barbarians, all at play."

And in the summer of 1866, Salt as a young student was coached for a scholarship by the then Rev. C. Kegan Paul, who later left the Church and founded the well-known publishing firm of that name. Paul was then a modernist of the school of Charles Kingsley and F. D. Maurice, who confirmed pupils. Some regarded this rite with considerable misgiving, but in this instance it proved much less irksome than was feared. And Salt expresses his gratitude for the "simplicity of his method, which was free from the morbid inquiries then common in schools. I think he asked me only one question: 'Is it wrong to doubt?' This was a problem in which I felt no sort of concern; making a bold shot, I replied, 'No,' and was gratified to find that I had answered correctly."

The Headmaster of Eton, Dr. Hornby, frequently flogged offenders, and it is said that scarcely a day passed without some culprit being bidden to "stay after school" to receive castigation. When, during vacation, visitors were shown over the College, the then guide usually directed their attention to the "block" and then remark: "They receive the punishment on their seats." To Salt this procedure was revolting, as it proved "a disgusting sight even to the two 'lower boys,' who then had to act as 'holders down'; still more so to the Sixth Form Prepositor, whose duty it was to be present; most of all, one would suppose to the headmaster." It is noteworthy that when Dr. Lytton succeeded to this post the birch was replaced by a cane.

If almost invariably men of ability, the assistant masters at Eton were sometimes extremely eccentric, and their sayings and doings gave rise to many quaint stories. "Russell Day" is cited as "a quiet and insignificant looking little man, who had a mordant wit and gift of ready epigram, which caused him to be dreaded alike by master and boys. 'Friend, thou hast learned this lesson with a crib: a thing in which thou liest,' was the remark in the course of a Theocritus lesson to a member of his Division."

Salt proceeded from Eton to Cambridge where King's College seemed very sedate after the turmoil of his public school. Cambridge was then emerging from the traditional customs and was slowly adapting itself to modern requirements. Maurice was in the 'seventies of last century, the incumbent of St. Edward's Church, and despite the unspeakable dreariness of the customary chapel services a few undergraduates sometimes attended St. Edward's to listen to the preacher's discourses, in which the flames of

hell were extinguished. Maurice's curate was Edward Carpenter, who left the Church in 1871 to become a prose writer and poet of distinction as his *My Days and Dreams*, and *England Arise*, clearly prove. Salt recalls with regret the circumstance that he was once so enthused by one of Dean Farrar's missionary sermons that he made a contribution he could ill afford. But he soon realized that he had been imposed upon, and that "it was worse than folly to send missions to other countries when we ourselves are little better than pagans at home." Still, some opine that even Pagans were not nearly so black as they have been painted by prejudiced clerical writers.

From Cambridge our veteran returned to his old College as an assistant to the then Headmaster, Dr. Hornby, and his description of his sensations when he first confronted his class is psychologically suggestive. Men of renown occasionally delivered lectures at Eton. Among these were Gladstone, Lowell, Arnold and Morris. Most of the speakers chose colourless themes, but Morris mentioned Socialism, at that time anathema, and was hissed for his pains. Ruskin also addressed the boys, and to him Salt awards pre-eminence as a lecturer. His "lucid train of thought and clear musical voice could hold enchanted an audience, even of Eton boys, for the full space of an hour."

In those distant days divinity was constantly in evidence, and the wearisome experiences of theological instruction no doubt drove many in later life to discard religion altogether. The sufferings endured both by preceptors and pupils, it is suggested, induced many to hail the time

When Reason's rays, illuming all,
Shall put the saints to rout,
And Peter's holiness shall pall,
And Paul's shall peter out.

Although the real religion of Eton was spotless respectability, the rebellious spirit was not unknown. One of the junior masters departed and afterwards became prominent in the Social Democratic Federation. Hornby dismissed several insurgent assistants, including the scholar, Oscar Browning, whose departure was a serious loss to Eton. Hornby was succeeded by Dr. Warre, whose rugged exterior could not conceal a truer sympathy and understanding than his predecessor ever displayed. Salt, himself, eventually decided to resign his post and bade farewell to Dr. Warre. "Most kindly he expressed his regret," says Salt, "that I had lost faith in that public school system to which he himself as all Etonians are aware, devoted a lifetime of unsparing service." Warre attributed Salt's desertion to the vegetarian diet he had adopted, but was told that Socialism was partly to blame, when the Headmaster then exclaimed: "Then blow us up, blow us up! There is nothing left for it but that."

In the 'eighties unsophisticated citizens feared the approaching advent of Socialism. John Burns and Hyndman were regarded as wicked demagogues satanically bent on a bloody revolution. Hyndman's repeated prophecies of the almost immediate overthrow of Capitalism were taken seriously both in conventional and Socialist circles, despite the fact that they were never fulfilled. In 1887, John Burns and Cunninghame Graham went to prison for alleged turbulence in Trafalgar Square, when what would have been a perfectly peaceful demonstration was violently prevented by the police, who acted under the instructions of that egregious Commissioner, Sir Charles Warren, whose downfall was not long delayed. When a great gathering welcomed Burns and Graham on their release, Salt participated in the celebration, when he and others lost their watches. As he humorously remarks: "This placed us in an embarrassing

position; for having assembled to protest against the conduct of the police in the Square, we could not with dignity invoke their aid against the pickpockets."

Salt joined the Fabian Society and became deeply impressed by the ability of G.B.S. But he soon discovered that although the Fabians deemed themselves Socialists they were Individualists with a new label. And he justly complains of the neglect of those two fine poets of freedom: Francis Adams and John Barlas. Several of the latter's poems, including *Le Jeune Barbaroux*, originally appeared in the *National Reformer*. Edward Carpenter was another free spirit whose writings Shaw audaciously intimated might be classified as trivial and profound. The unimportant productions were penned, it was suggested, before Carpenter came under Shavian influences, and the really valuable ones were composed in consequence of this inspiration. "I mentioned this scheme to Carpenter," states Salt, "and he smilingly suggested that the names of the debtor and creditor must be reversed."

Shelley's centenary was celebrated in 1894, when a highly respectable and conventional gathering of country squires and "littery gents" participated in an afternoon commemoration at Horsham, when the Freethought poet's character was solemnly depicted as truly pious. But this assembly was completely eclipsed by the magnificent celebration at the Hall of Science in London in the evening, when the chairman, the late G. W. Foote, delivered a splendid address, and Bernard Shaw "convulsed the audience by his description of the Horsham apologetics." An article by Shaw also appeared in the *Albemarle Review*, in which he suggested that the Republican, Shelley, should be represented at Horsham on a bas-relief, "in a tall hat, Bible in hand, leading his children on Sunday morning to Church in his native parish."

Among his various writings, Salt's brief biographies of James Thomson (B.V.) and Richard Jefferies will merit remembrance, while in his *Seventy Years* he speaks gratefully of the famous men who loyally supported him in his humanitarian crusade. These included Thomas Hardy, George Meredith, Russell Wallace and Watts, the eminent artist. The Socialist Salt's tribute to the arch-individualist, Spencer is significant: "Mr. Herbert Spencer's philosophical writings were fully imbued with the humane spirit. An opponent of militarism, of vindictive penal laws, of corporal punishment for the young, of cruel sports, and indeed of every form of brutality, he has done as much as any man of his generation to humanize public opinion. He willingly signed the Humanitarian League's memorials against the Royal Buckhounds and the Eton Beagles." It is also noteworthy that when some others hesitated to sign the petition for G. W. Foote's release, Spencer promptly affixed his signature to the document.

Salt also writes highly of the loyalty to principle ever displayed by the then Editor of the *Freethinker*. Moreover, he continues: "I have heard no public speaker who had the faculty of going so straight to the core of a subject. . . . It was always an intellectual treat to hear him speak; and though owing to religious prejudices, his public reputation as thinker and writer were absurdly below his deserts, he had the regard of George Meredith and others who were qualified to judge. . . . All social reformers, whether they acknowledge it or not, owe a debt of gratitude to iconoclasts like Bradlaugh and Foote, who made free speech possible where it was hardly possible before."

Finally, the reader will discover many other gems in Salt's remembrances of brave departed days spent among the so-far uncivilized inhabitants of our island home.

T. F. PALMER.

Proverbs

THE name of Solomon is associated with Wisdom, wives, and concubines. Of the latter we read in 1 Kings xi. 1: "Now Solomon was immoderately fond of women. He had 700 wives and 300 concubines." Well might the poet Burns sing:—

"The wisest man the warl' e'er saw,
He dearly lov'd the lassies O."

His father, King David, had only seven wives and ten concubines (2 Sam. iii. 2, 3, 4, 5; xx. 3), but David hadn't as much wisdom as Solomon! David's literary output in the Book of Psalms and elsewhere is very limited. The Book of Psalms, in the Hebrew, is made up of one hundred and fifty psalms, arranged in five books, all but thirty-four of them having titles. The Septuagint gives one hundred and fifty-one psalms, not arranged in five books, all but three of them having titles. Our Revised Version arranges the psalms in five books, all but thirty-four of them having titles. This collection of psalms may have been begun by David, but many centuries were doubtless devoted to their composition and compilation. Psalm cxxxvii. seems to have been written after the Babylonian captivity. David made his contribution—some eighty of them—to the book of Psalms in the eleventh century B.C. The captivity took place in the seventh century B.C., and lasted for seventy years, four hundred years, at least, after David.

In 1 Kings iv. 29 we read that: "The Lord gave Solomon understanding and very comprehensive knowledge; and the effusions of his heart were like the sand on the sea shore." As specimens of his wisdom "He uttered 3,000 parables, and his odes were 5,000." (1,005 A.V.)

Wives—Queens—he kept as a duty. They brought dowries with them, entered into fellowship with him, and he assisted them in the government of their families. Their children inherited his estate, and equality of treatment. But differences of opinion created family disturbances, which were of frequent occurrence. And Solomon, to preserve order among his wives and their children, wrote 3,000 proverbs. But they failed to preserve order! When old age came upon him his wives "turned away his heart after other gods," and instead of burning these strange women for heresy, and being readily forgiven and thanked for doing so, he "burnt and sacrificed unto their gods." (1 Kings xi) Not possessed of sufficient wisdom to withstand the wiles of his foreign wives, he did evil in the sight of the Lord!

When mothers' meetings were held in the Palace Solomon sought refuge and comfort among his concubines. These women were permitted by God, and were sacredly classed along with the *things* not to be coveted—such as *wives, oxen, asses, etc.*—belonging to their owner (Exod. xx. 17). Nowadays they may be coveted and hired by those able to pay a fee—though condemned and forbidden by Christians! While they retained office they were treated by the Jews as secondary wives, but their children did not inherit their father's estate. Favours for themselves and their children were bought with kisses. When sick of wives Solomon comforted himself with concubines. And his love songs—his woeful ballads—5,000 of them, made to three hundred eyebrows—"the effusions of his heart were like the sand on the sea-shore!"—were devised only when he was "sick of love." As B.V. puts it:—

"Singing is sweet; but be sure of this,
Lips only sing when they cannot kiss.
Did he ever suspire a tender lay
While her presence took his breath away?"

But, while a few of his proverbs are extant, his songs, probably considered unfit for publication by his wives, were destroyed. The famous one attributed to him—"The Song of Songs"—he could not, and would not if he could, have written.

King David had more concubines than wives—ten concubines and seven wives. Solomon had more wives than concubines—seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines—and after reigning forty years in Jerusalem he died and left his son Roboam (Rehoboam A.V.) to reign in his stead. Profiting by his father's example he reverted to that of his grandfather—as regards concubines! Forty and one years old was he when he began to reign over eighteen wives and three score concubines. He reigned over them for seventeen years and he begat "twenty and eight sons, and three score daughters" (2 Chron. xi. 21). Now, if Roboam, with seventy-eight women, in seventeen years, begat eighty-eight children, how many children should King Solomon have begotten, with one thousand women, in forty years? Not quite 3,000! Instead of which he begat 3,000 proverbs.

In *Roughing It*, Mark Twain gives "Jim Blaine's Account of His Grandfather's Old Ram." Jim, before he could begin the story had to be "tranquilly, serenely, symmetrically drunk—not a hiccup to mar his voice, not a cloud on his brain thick enough to obscure his memory. Then he maundered off interminably from one thing to another till the whisky got the better of him and he fell asleep. The mention of the ram in the first sentence was as far as any man had ever heard him get concerning it." Thinking that this article would recall Jim Blaine's story to many readers, I mention it to acknowledge the slight similarity which was unavoidable.

The Book of Proverbs when dealt with in a very scholarly fashion is, as a rule, not very interesting to the thinker. Scholarship seems to neutralize thought.

Anyhow, I think one point should now be clear—that Solomon wrote proverbs for his wives, and songs for his concubines. And that the poet was mistaken when he attributed them to "qualms"!

To Solomon proverbs were the data of his ethics. To Herbert Spencer they were but interesting aphorisms.

But what is a proverb?

A proverb is a short, familiar, pithy sentence expressing a well known truth. Or it may be a similitude, a parable (Ezek. xvii. 2; xxiv. 3), a song or poem, prophetic (Num. xxiii. 7, 18), didactic (Job xxvii. 1) or derisive (Isa. xiv. 4) and so on. Now, is it necessary to say much more about the Book of Proverbs than that it consists of all the above? It is not an ethical treatise. The composition and compilation of this book, like the Psalms of David, were the work of many centuries.

In conclusion, I will give a few quotations from Thomson's Septuagint. Comparison with the A.V. will be found interesting.

Several proverbs are alluded to in the New Testament, and the following are quoted: Prov. iii. 11-12, in Heb. xii. 5-6; Prov. iii. 34, in Jas. iv. 6; Prov. xi. 31, in 1 Pet. iv. 18; Prov. xxv. 21-22, in Rom. xii. 20; and Prov. xxvi. 11, in 2 Pet. ii. 22:—

Prov. iii. 34. The Lord resisteth the proud; but he granteth favour to the humble.

Prov. x. 13. He who from his lips uttereth wisdom, smiteth an imprudent man with a rod.

Prov. x. 26. As vinegar is hurtful to the teeth; and smoke to the eyes; so is transgression to them who commit it.

Prov. xi. 29. He who hath no cover for his own house shall inherit the wind; and a fool shall be

servant to the prudent.

Prov. xiii. 7. Some pretend to be rich, having nothing; and some feign themselves poor, in great wealth.

Prov. xvii. 1. Better is a morsel with pleasure in peace; than a house full of goods and ill-gotten dainties, with contention.

Prov. xviii. 2. He who is void of understanding hath no use for wisdom; for he is rather led by folly.

Prov. xviii. 9. He who doth not use his endeavours to cure himself is brother to him who destroyeth himself.

Prov. xxi. 30. There is no wisdom, there is no fortitude, no counsel in the wicked.

Prov. xxvi. 17. He who meddlet with another's strife, is like one who taketh a dog by the tail.

Prov. xxvii. 15. A continual dropping driveth a man out of his house in a rainy day: and so doth a contentious wife.

Prov. xxx. 29-31. There are three things which march well and a fourth which is stately in its gait—a young lion the strongest of beasts which turneth not aside nor feareth any beast—and a cock strutting magnanimously among his females—and a he-goat marching at the head of a flock—and a king haranguing a nation.

Solomon, Rabbinical writers tell us, was a great philosopher and poet. He possessed magical power and knowledge. He was king over the whole earth. He reigned over devils and evil spirits and had the power of expelling them from the bodies of men and animals, and also of delivering people to them, etc. But, ignoring all this, I have tried, in the above, to array him only in all his Biblical glory!

GEORGE WALLACE.

A Graceful Gesture

This year in Parliament, one of the Conservative M.P.'s asked Mr. Chamberlain if it would not be a graceful gesture to Japan if our supply of ammunition to China was stopped. There was no reply to this question.

At one time in the history of this country, before our political morality has sunk to its present low level, an answer *would* have been forthcoming. There would have been an outbreak of indignation in the House; every paper would have commented adversely, and it is more than likely that the member in question would have been called upon by his constituents to resign. Even Gladstone, who had an abnormal capacity for moralizing his desires, rose from a sick bed, at over 80 years of age, and tramped the country protesting against the Bulgarian atrocities!

We read of the appalling slaughter of Chinese women and children, and an Englishman stands up and asks his colleagues if even the inadequate means of protection that the Chinese have, should not be still further reduced, and if by doing this we should not be paying a graceful compliment to their murderers. But although the member was a Conservative, the other parties are just as guilty, because not a single man registered his disgust or disapproval of one of the foulest propositions that had ever been propounded in Parliament. Yet it was only the other day that the *Church Times* proudly told us that 200 members of the House of Commons published a "Manifesto of Witness" to their own religious faith. Their object, the paper says was distinct from any direct problem of politics, being simply to make a profession of dissent from the proceedings of the so-called Anti-God Conference.

Again quoting from the same paper, we read:—

In order to encourage their fellow citizens, they testified to certain firm convictions which they held themselves, beginning with the Fatherhood of God, which implies that His guidance and help are bestowed on those who seek them, and the brotherhood of man, which is the basis of human freedom, and requires the practice of truth and justice as its practical manifestation. It was clearly implied that this practice, to be effective, must be a Christian activity. The Manifesto

then plainly stated that the combined aspiration of the human spirit and its moral weakness necessitate repentance and forgiveness in order to attain harmony; being once established, the means to settle differences and secure peace would follow.

But the gem of this leading article is summed up as follows: "They (the M.P.'s) claimed that National Policy is determined by National Character, and by the inspiration on which National Leaders are able to draw."

If this incident in the House was a proof of our National Character, then the *Church Times* is easily satisfied with its champions.

The Chinese evidently do not need any protection against bombs, for the *Church Times* says that what is required for a reconstruction of civilization is a moral and spiritual rearmament.

An even worse feature than war itself, is the casual attitude towards human life adopted by the nations which are themselves not engaged in war. Thus we read in a Reuter dispatch, which is not even starred or headed—that near Hong Kong over 1,000 Chinese were starved to death in one month. We pick up a paper and see that 50 people have been killed in an air raid in Barcelona; and then we turn over the page to read the latest racing or football results, which interest most of us much more.

The whole attitude was well expressed by an Australian writer S. Snell, some years ago in a short poem:—

TOUCHED

He read about eight hundred dead
Upon the field of battle spread
In motley squalor grey and red.
"My God, its terrible!" said he . . .
"My love, another cup of tea."

They talked of towns torn up like rags,
Guns belching death from riven crags,
And little girls like haunted hags . . .
Said she: "I'm furious at the way
That woman did my hair to-day."

We turn from the Conservative M.P. who proposed the graceful gesture, to the attitude of the Labour Party. They have voiced their indignation throughout the country at the treatment of Czechoslovakia, yet how little real protest their leaders have made against the rape of Spain! Why? Because by so doing they were afraid of losing the Catholic vote, which hangs over the Labour Party like a blight not only in this country but also in Australia, New Zealand and Canada. They are prepared to thunder about the tyranny of Fascism, but on the subject of the tyranny of the Roman Catholic Church, they are a lot of dumb dogs.

If the leaders of the Labour Party were more concerned with the future of Democracy and less with obtaining the immediate spoils of office, they would resent Roman Catholic dictation and tell the dictators to go to blazes: and in doing this they would probably not even lose votes because the Roman Catholic vote is to a great extent, a big bluff. They never publish their figures, and there are quite enough decent people in the community who resent tyranny of any kind; and quite enough among the other religious sects who, although just as much opposed to liberty as are Roman Catholics, will always vote against them.

The fact that Fascism in Germany is now opposed to Catholicism does not alter the point. It is a fight between two tyrannies for the possession of the child. Probably, of the two, Fascism is the more brutal, but the other is just as dangerous, and much more subtle.

Now that we have horrors served up to us for seven days a week and have come to accept them as part of our everyday life, isn't it about time that the Church, in common decency, should cease bleating next Christmas about peace on earth and mercy mild? Isn't it about time that, with a large percentage of the population suffering from malnutrition, the whole of Europe one huge armed camp, rubber truncheon and castor oil rule and general brutality firmly enthroned in many countries, we should stop wasting money in sending missionaries to convert the heathen?

F. A. HORNIBROOK.

Correspondence

GERMANY AND FOREIGN MONEY

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In your article in the *Freethinker* of October 30, entitled "The Power of Social Coercion," you appear to go to such absurd lengths in an endeavour to justify a Pacifist attitude, that I can only conclude that you are allowing sentiment to overcome reason.

There were quite a number of apparent inconsistencies, but I will dwell upon one, and in this case I was so surprised, and my respect for yourself so high, that I find myself considering whether it was myself that was in error; this prize absurdity was the suggestion that the German Government were manufacturing aeroplanes from profits made out of tourists seeking *cheap* holidays.

Consider the facts: The German Government offer facilities to English tourists. On the face of it, the German Government foots the bill, and the German taxpayer pays the piper. True the tourist leaves his money behind, but he leaves it in the hands of hotel-keepers and others interested in the tourist traffic. These people receive not only the tourists' money, but also the balance of the extra tourist rate.

Now consider the position of the German Government. English money has been taken into the country, where it is of no use except for the purchase of English goods against which there are prohibitive tariffs and embargoes.

It is absurd to suggest that the German Government is going out of its way to attract English money, and then allow it to be pocketed by the hotelkeepers, etc., and a moment's consideration should show these tourists' facilities are a method of subsidizing the tourist trade.

To find the re-iteration of such an absurd suggestion in other connexions would not be surprising, but in the *Freethinker* . . . surely this is an instance of your oft-made statement: At the present time there is a greater need than ever for cool heads and clear thinkers.

H. PREECE.

[We regret that we have been compelled to slightly abbreviate the above letter, but nothing material has been omitted. We need only say by way of criticism, that an understanding of the financial situation would remove Mr. Preece's fear of a lapse into insanity on my part. Germany's great need has been for foreign exchange, and every shilling of foreign money is helping it. That it goes into the hands of hotel-keepers first makes not the slightest difference. All foreign money reaching this country, after deducting custom and tariff due, goes into private pockets first. But greater than the actual money received by Germany is the apparent endorsement of the obscene brutality of the German governing gang by the fraternizing of British men and women. Hence my plea that all who prize decency in public life should show by their attitude their real opinions.

I think Mr. Preece confesses his blunder when he says that out of many "apparent inconsistencies" he selects only one. That, I think, is the one solid point in his letter. The inconsistencies are really "apparent" only.—C.C.]

Obituary

EDMUND PARTINGTON

We regret to announce the death of Mr. Edmund Partington of Westhoughton, Lancashire, at the age of eighty. Mr. Partington was well-known and respected for his openly-expressed views in Westhoughton and the surrounding district. He died in Southport, where he had been staying with his son, who, however, made arrangements for his funeral at the Cemetery of Westhoughton, and the delivery of a Secular Service at the graveside by Mr. J. V. Shortt.—J.V.S.

I am drawn by conviction like a Man, not by a halter like an Ass.—*Robert Burns.*

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

OUTDOOR

KINGSTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place): 7.30, A Lecture. Weather permitting.

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond): 11.30, Mrs. N. Buxton. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mrs. N. Buxton.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Collins and Tuson.

INDOOR

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4): 7.30, Father Vincent McNabb, O.P.—"The Use and Limits of Reason."

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1): 11.0, Professor G. W. Keeton, M.A., LL.D.—"The English Tradition."

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. ("The Laurie Arms," Crawford Place, Edgware Road, W.): 7.30, T. H. Elstob—"On Being Alive."

COUNTRY

OUTDOOR

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Haymarket): 7.30, Saturday—A Lecture.

INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane): 7.0, R. H. Rosetti (London)—"Christianity and the Growth of Militarism."

BIRKENHEAD BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Hall, Whetstone Lane): 8.0, Wednesday, Debate—"Is the Belief in God Reasonable?" *Affir.*: Rev. Percival M. Depres (Methodist). *Neg.*: Mr. G. Whitehead (N.S.S.). Admission by ticket only, 6d. A very few tickets will be on sale at the door.

BRADFORD BRANCH N.S.S. (Laycock's Forum, Kirkgate): 7.15, Mr. L. Corina—"Our Mind: Material or Spirit?."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Christianity and Crime"

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh): 7.0, Dr A. C. Stevens—"The Making of Animal Life." Illustrated by Sound film.

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow): 7.0, Debate—"Which is the Worst Book in the Bible?" Muriel Whitefield—Old Testament. Arthur Copland—New Testament.

GREENOCK BRANCH N.S.S. (Forrester's Hall, Trafalgar Street): 7.0, J. Rattray—"Esperanto and Secularism."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate): Mr. Allan Flanders—"Freethought and Politics Today."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, entrance in Christian Street): 7.0, G. H. Taylor (Stockport)—"Will Materialism Explain Mind?"

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (King's Café, 64-66 Oxford Road, Manchester, near All Saints Church): 7.0, Mr. G. Thomson (Liverpool)—"Fascism, Freethought and Christianity."

PRESTON BRANCH N.S.S. (Farmers' Arms Hotel): 7.0, Mr. R. Jenkinson—"The Nature of Matter."

SUNDERLAND BRANCH N.S.S. (Co-operative Hall, Green Street): 7.30, Mr. G. H. Dalkin (Stockport)—A Lecture.

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PRINCIPLES AND OBJECTS.

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

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

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