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Views and Opinions

Peace and War

THE international situation is no longer a question of politics. When a decision involves the direction of world culture, and the life and happiness of millions of men and women, it is idle to discuss it in terms of this or that political party or policy. For this reason we are pleased, as the overwhelming majority of men and women will be in every country that is not covered with the black cloak of Fascism, that Mr. Chamberlain has been forced by sheer pressure of circumstances to make a definite stand against Fascist aggression. He is compelled to admit that he was fooled and swindled by Hitler at Munich; he is realizing that in the matter of the higher international life something more disinterested and more intelligent than the advice of the "City" is to be studied. He knows now that the promises of the Berlin Brigands are fashioned in falsehood, and that Mr. Duff Cooper's description of Hitler as a "thrice-perjured traitor" is richly deserved, though to be just even to this international criminal he has openly warned the world of his aims, and has said that he holds lying, brutality and deceit as legitimate methods of achieving them. Mr. Chamberlain says the Munich agreement is dead. It was never alive. Save by an abuse of language it never existed. Consider. The "agreement" was never discussed with those who were most implicated, the representatives of Czechoslovakia. Two of them came to Munich, but they were taken in hand by the police and were never asked their opinion about anything. Russia, one feels in deference to the City's fear of Russian political theories, was never consulted on the "Pact." Hitler simply delivered another ultimatum, and the function of Mr. Chamberlain and the French representative was to sign it. The famous armistice signature at the end of the war was not more of a dictated document than was the Munich "agreement." Mr. Chamberlain felt proud that the Munich "agreement" had been accomplished. As even the Observer remarks "last

week showed beyond dispute what Munich really meant."

* * *

Munich

Mr. Chamberlain was warned of all that has happened. Hitler himself, in his book, told the world plainly that it would happen. In that programme, bullying, lying, deceit, and plunder, played a great part. It was our Prime Minister who gave way to what is now generally admitted to have been a gigantic bluff, and so paved the way for the gangsters increasing their resources, and holding to ransom millions of people who might have been fighting with us instead of against us if war came. It is almost insulting to be told by Mr. Chamberlain that he "no longer" places reliance on Hitler's word. Let us hope that we shall hear no more of his having saved Europe from war. He did nothing of the kind. The choice was not what that special pleader Sir John Simon—who with the unethical attitude of a hired advocate always argues to his brief—between war and peace, it was a question of whether Great Britain and France would yield to bluff; or make it quite clear to the chief Brigand that if he persisted he would have to face the British Empire, France, many of the European States, Russia, probably Turkey, with the U.S.A. in the background, at least. In that case there is not now the slightest doubt that Czechoslovakia would have been saved, the smaller nations strengthened in their attitude, and Hitler lowered in the opinion of his people. The choice in the September situation was not that of war or peace, but of war or something worse than war. Munich gave us the worse, and Mr. Chamberlain hailed it as a triumph.

* * *

According to Plan

Mr. Chamberlain asked whether the seizure of Czechoslovakia was the end of a chapter or the beginning of a new one. The answer to this is—"neither." It is the continuation of a chapter that began with the seizure of Austria. Again we need only go to Hitler himself for the answer, although Mr. Chamberlain appears to be unacquainted with what millions of people know. On September 28 the Czech police made a raid on Henlein's office. They seized some parcels of pamphlets printed in Berlin and which bore a map showing the Nazi plan for the domination of Europe. The *News-Chronicle* published a copy of this leaflet in its issue for March 16. On that map the annexation of Austria is fixed for the Spring of 1938; Czechoslovakia for the Autumn of 1938; Hungary, Spring 1939; Poland, 1939; Jugoslavia, 1940; Roumania and Bulgaria 1940; Parts of France, Switzerland, Holland, etc., Spring 1941. Soviet Ukraine, 1941. Hitler has not disguised his plans, he has advertised them, and if our own intelligence department is not aware of them it should be disbanded and some simple recording machines

placed in the public streets. Hitler is only at the beginning of his march—unless something in the nature of a World League is formed to stop him. Even at the cost of treating Russia as a welcome ally this should be done; even at the cost of the displeasure of some of our highly-placed individuals such as Lord Londonderry and Lord Halifax it must be done. And if it is done, all the disgust that exists in Germany against the obscene brutality of its rulers will find vent. As it is, those outsiders who have professed faith in Hitler's words have been the best advocates Hitler has among the German people. And, just to think of it, but for the strong feeling expressed against it, men such as Goering would have come to London to be received by the Government as an honoured visitor. Only the danger of a public disturbance prevented that.

* * *

Our Press

One thing worth noting since the annexation of Czechoslovakia is the effect on certain of our newspapers. Such papers as the *Sunday Dispatch*, the *Daily Mail*, and the *Express* have been for long giving Hitler what support they could, in a left-handed way, by insisting that whatever went on in the South East of Europe was no concern of ours. We were concerned only with the British Empire. Our only interest was to erect a kind of wall round the Empire and go on building up armaments. Knowingly or unknowingly this was excellent pro-Hitler propaganda, since all that Hitler asked for was to be left alone while he was gobbling up the smaller States, and was then prepared to try a test of strength with France and Britain. There was an evidence of the same undercurrent of support for Hitler given by the British section of the Nazi movement, which finding it not quite profitable to agitate against sympathy being shown to German refugees, were condemned to parading before meetings held to enlist sympathy with Hitler's victims, and demanding that help should be given to our own poor alone.

Now, quite abruptly, and with no explanation for the change (there is, of course, the obvious one that the instant reaction of support to Chamberlain's Birmingham speech assured him of the support of the British people as a whole) these same papers have discovered that we are very much concerned with what other countries are doing, and we cannot afford to stand idly by while Hitler pursues his path of rapine and plunder. The Brigands of Berlin are very active propagandists, but they are not very astute ones. They spend large sums of money on their propaganda, and they fool many into giving them some kind of help. But these newspaper-circulation gentlemen are very quick to detect a change in public opinion, and the British public is not vicious, although it is inclined to be very foolish, and is notoriously ill-informed about foreign nations. But this perception by Mr. Chamberlain of aims that Hitler has for years been advertising, with the reaction to it of the British public, has warned these large circulation merchants that there are limits to the extent to which they may fool the people. Hence the sudden and unexplained conversion where the ethic is first, discover a "stunt," second, that a stunt ceases to be a stunt if it is adopted by too many at the same time, and, third, when one "stunt" ceases to have a circulation value, try something else. Newspapers have no use for forlorn hopes or for anything that threatens a decrease in the number of readers.

This talk about our not being concerned with what other countries are doing is very foolish chatter. Some months ago (April 10, 1938) I wrote an article pointing out that a policy of national isolation, was not

merely wrong, it was impossible. We must consider what other countries are doing, and we must act with some regard to what they are doing, whether we like doing so or not. So long as we live in the same world, and so long as there are actual and possible communications between one country and others, there is no possibility of isolation, it is always a question of regulating our conduct by co-operation with them, or by opposition to them, or by taking precautions against them. If we decline collective action for mutual benefit, we are left with the choice of collective action for protection or antagonism. But in either case what we do must have a regard to what others are doing or propose doing. To-day we have, thanks partly to our own Government, broken down the collective action promised by a League of Nations, so we have collective action with Germany and Italy in building battleships, bombing planes and other instruments of destruction. I expect newspaper writers know this quite well, but it doesn't provide material for a "stunt." Besides some of their readers might have a suspicion that it was part of a conspiracy to make them think.

* * *

What is Ahead?

Publishing exigencies compel us to go to press some days before the date printed on this issue, and it is possible that the situation may have altered considerably by the time the *Freethinker* is on sale. But meanwhile one may ask, in all this talk of Hitler, what of Mussolini? Mr. Duff Cooper's apt description of one Fascist leader is quite applicable to the other. No one has said more frequently and more plainly than Mussolini that he will keep no treaty that does not fall in line with what he considers the interest of Italy, and Mr. Chamberlain has expressed, concerning the honesty of Mussolini, the same trust he expressed concerning Hitler. Moreover, Mussolini unless he sees the red light in time, and "rats" from the "Axis," as Italy ratted from its ally in the war, will be compelled to do as Hitler orders. But does Mr. Chamberlain still believe in the bluff that Hitler and Mussolini will not retain a hold on Spain after the present war comes to an end? It is to be hoped that in the interests of world civilization, Mr. Chamberlain will recognize, so long as he remains Prime Minister, that the word of one half the "Axis" is no more worthy of trust than is the other half. The lesson received should be thorough, and no country can be properly served by good intentions alone.

A final point, a little fantastical, perhaps, but still worth noting if anything that is decent in human nature and anything in our civilization is worth saving. Hitler and his gang have not the intellectuality to vary their technique much, although they might reply that it has proved successful enough. There are Germans by descent in Switzerland, there are also Germans in many other European countries. How long will it be before Berlin will import a few more, and we begin to hear of Germans being ill-treated, followed by appeals to Hitler for help, and concluding with a march of German troops? Holland may expect to hear something soon, so may Switzerland, so may Memel and Dantzig.

We have also Germans in this country. Indeed with a Royal Family of German descent, and with the large number of Germans who have come to this country during the past two hundred and fifty years, it may well be that if and when occasion offers, these may be counted as a German minority that should have special treatment. We have also established in London, by a nation that will not permit even English papers free admission, a headquarters of German Nazism, with which our own Nazis will be in touch. This institution avows it as its object to carry on

political propaganda. I have not the least objection to that, but might we not insist on reciprocity? Might we not insist, as a *quid pro quo*, that we should be permitted to set up an institution in order to carry on democratic propaganda amongst Germans? Now that Mr. Chamberlain has invited the people to hold up their heads where Hitler is concerned, why not ask them to hold it up proudly and boldly? One never yet gained much by trying to please a bully or by bribing a blackmailer. And why not, before sending an ambassador back to Berlin makes two resolves. One is to send a Jew to represent us, the other to insist that on future consultations with Germany where international matters are concerned a representative of Soviet Russia shall be invited to attend? While we are getting up we might at least stand up, and show by our actions that we mean what we say. If we believe in human equality let us act on it.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Child-like Credulity

Thus do I ever make my fool my purse.—*Shakespeare*.
You do not believe, you only believe that you believe.
Coleridge.

AMONG the advertisements in the issue of the *Catholic Times* for March 3, there are a number which are very attractive. They refer to forthcoming trips to Lourdes, Spain, Rome, and the eastern shrines of France, etc. One of them reads: "Birmingham, 7th Diocesan Pilgrimage to Lourdes. Under the leadership of Archbishop Williams. August 4-12th. Inclusive fares from Birmingham, etc, £8 10s.; from London, £7 15s." And, so profitable are these pilgrimages, that world-famous tourist agencies cater for this business.

These shrines throw a vivid light on the business practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Half a million persons visit Lourdes each year, so it will be seen that such pilgrimages are lucrative. Not only the ecclesiastics, but hotel-proprietors and shopkeepers benefit; as well as railway and shipping companies, and tourist agencies. In its last analysis, a shrine is a vested interest, and its continued popularity is to the financial interest of a large number of people.

Lourdes is famous for its grotto, which contains a spring reputed to possess miraculous powers of healing. The buildings include the basilica, the chapel of the rosary, and a hospice for pilgrims. It is a modern shrine, dating only from 1858, when, it is said, the "Holy Virgin" appeared to a peasant girl. The pilgrimage started the same year as the reputed happening, and has been going on ever since with increasing business success.

Another famous place of pilgrimage is Loreto, a city of Italy. The object of veneration is the Santa Casa, or "sacred house," a building said to have been the home of the "Virgin Mary," at Nazareth, miraculously transported to Italy. The building is protected by a marble screen. Over it an elaborate Church has been built. It is interesting to recall that the Virgin of Loretto has been proclaimed "the Madonna of the Airmen." Doubtless, the Romish ecclesiastics hoped, by this action, to give additional popularity to a very famous and profitable shrine.

The riddle of the Lourdes and Loreto shrines is easily read by all but Roman Catholics, mesmerised by the abracadabra of their faith. So far as Lourdes is concerned, similar stories of apparitions are common enough. The case of Loreto is a much bolder flight of imagination and chicanery. In this instance the Romanist faithful are invited to believe that the house

in which the "Virgin Mary" brought up her family at Nazareth remained there for thirteen hundred years. This in itself is an astounding story, but religious faith and delusion is capable of even greater strain. The story continues that some angels, becoming alarmed for the safety of the old homestead, took action on their own account. One day the house vanished, leaving not a brick behind. The compassionate angels had carried it right across the Mediterranean Ocean to the Coast of Dalmatia, where it remained for three years, whilst the angels recuperated. Then the angels pulled together again and took the building on another journey across the Gulf of Adriatic to Loreto, where it was fixed.

Of course, Loreto possessed not only the "Virgin's" house, but an image of the august lady herself, which was almost as old as the building. The story goes that this particular image was carved by an old friend of the family, better known as "Saint Luke." Its shrine became one of the most famous religious show-places of the Christian world. Among other adornments the image had a gold crown with over three hundred diamonds, and eighty-five rubies, the gift of the pious Queen Christina of Sweden. During the French Revolutionary wars the shrine was sacked, and the image taken away. This time there was no angelic or celestial intervention. The image was restored when Napoleon made terms with the Pope. A few years ago the revenues of this particular shrine were estimated at £12,000 a year. The Loreto image has been credited with similar "miracles" to those of Lourdes and other popular shrines, which miracles can be easily explained by those who have made a study of faith-healing. All alleged miracle-workers, however, it will be noted, have never succeeded in restoring an amputated limb.

This child-like credulity is passing wonderful in grown men and women. To study it is to essay an inquiry into the psychology of a crowd, and an ignorant one at that. Let there be no mistake whatever on this point. Roman Catholics are mainly ignorant folk. They are not allowed to read any books or publications criticizing their religion. They are told that by doing so they imperil their immortal souls, and are in danger of eternal damnation in hell-fire. Not only freethought publications, but books and periodicals of other Christian bodies are taboo. Even colporteurs of Protestant Bible Societies are ill-treated in Catholic countries, for a zealous Papist will no more read a Protestant version of the Christian Bible than he would read the works of Paine or Voltaire. No Roman Catholic may even become a Freemason, because priests object to all secret societies other than their own. If a Catholic young man attends a freethought lecture, he sins more grievously than if he stole his employer's money. Free reading is denied to the Catholic faithful. Priests, like other dictators, know what they are about. Papists must read what is chosen for them, for their pastors and masters realize that to read freely is to think freely.

This gullibility is fostered in sectarian schools from early childhood. Hence the priestly desire for control in national education. The child is carefully taught to respect the clergy as a sacred caste apart, and the fairy-tales of the Christian Scriptures are instilled into the young brain as being fact instead of legend. In after life the old tales have a familiar ring, even when half-believed. Catholic children are taught the lives of the saints, taken to church on saint's-days, and taught to be good Papists. Secular instruction is kept to the bare minimum. Indeed, Church schools notoriously employ the lowest paid teachers, and possess the worst equipment. State-aid to such sectarian schools means that public money is used to

bolster superstition, and this is no less true of Protestant as of Catholic schools.

Sooner or later the situation must be faced by Democrats. The State consists of persons who profess all sorts of religion and none. If the State compels its citizens to pay for religious teaching in which they do not believe, it commits a palpable injustice. This is not a question between one sect and another sect. It is, indeed, unjust to make a Quaker pay for teaching Romanism or an Unitarian for teaching the deity of Christ; but it is unjust to make an Atheist pay for teaching Godism. Moreover, it is wrong to instil twelfth-century ignorance into children in the twentieth century. The solution of the problem is the secularizing of national education. To-day, one finds that in a Democratic State a hundred millions of public money is being spent yearly in turning out young people saturated with the ideas of the Middle Ages, which is a perfectly topsy-turvy proceeding, however it may appeal to priests who desire docile and generous flocks to carry out their behests. The old Feudalism is dead, but the corpse is being carried through the supineness of people who do not realize that this still enables Priestcraft to "bestride this narrow world like a Colossus." If the key of the future is anywhere it is there. If the social fabric is to be re-organized, the priest must be eliminated from national education.

MIMNERMUS

Some Abodes of Genius

OLD houses which have been the homes of celebrated people are always interesting; they possess an atmosphere in which imaginative minds find pleasure in recalling the appearance and pursuit of their former tenants. It has been my good fortune to have resided, quite fortuitously, in several such houses, and the recollection of these visits still affords many pleasant hours of retrospection. Perhaps a brief account of some of them may be of interest.

At Felpham, near Bognor Regis, there is a picturesque little thatched house known as Blake's Cottage, where I passed many pleasant days some twenty years ago. The cottage was tenanted by the poet-artist for three years from 1800; it then stood alone, but other dwellings encompass it now and the view seaward is shut out.

It was in the cottage garden that Blake used to dream and compose, while he watched the far-distant ships making their way up channel. It was there too that his vivid imagination created one of the strange hallucinations to which he was subject; this was a fairy's funeral, and he described how the little people carried out the obsequies one summer morning on a flower-shielded bank. Many such visions came to Blake; Milton and Shakespeare were his constant companions, and at Dulwich he was aware of a company of angels seated on a tree.

Few of Blake's contemporaries appreciated his wonderful dream-pictures, or his vivid verse, but they are prized now. A few years ago in the Earl of Crewe's sale the illustrations for the *Book of Job* were sold for £6,500, and the designs for Dante's *Divina Commedia*, for the immense sum of 7,300 guineas.

There was one prophet who recognized the genius of the painter visionary, the artist John Thomas, or "Rainy Day," Smith. In the volume of entertaining gossip entitled *A Book for a Rainy Day*, Smith wrote: "A time will come when the numerous works of Blake will be sought after with the utmost avidity."

A memorial to Blake was unveiled in the Crypt of St. Paul's Cathedral by the Earl of Balcarres, July 6,

1927. At Albion House, Marlow-on-Thames, I lodged during the summer of 1881; it was bought by Shelley in 1816 for £1,200 as "a fixed settled eternal home," but he occupied it for little more than a year. My landlady, who was so old that she might have seen the poet, informed me that my room had been his library, the library in which, as Mary deplored, "the books became covered with mildew."

Mary had written from Bath to Shelley, who was staying with Leigh Hunt in London: "a house with a lawn, near a river or lake, noble trees or divine mountains—that should be our little mouse-hole to retire to." But in the winter Albion House was cold and damp, and Shelley, longing for warmth and sunshine, departed, on March 9, 1818, for Italy, never to return.

There was a pretty garden (a picture of it by G. D. Leslie, R.A., was exhibited at the Academy some years ago), where Shelley's infant son and little Allegra, the daughter of Byron and Clare Clarmont, used to play in the summer days of 1816.

It was on the river nearby, and in the solitude of Bisham Woods, that Shelley composed the poem, "Laon and Cythna," the "summer task," which he dedicated to his wife Mary.

The poem was issued under the above title, but, after a few copies had been sent out the publisher, Charles Ollier, refused to proceed. Shelley had made the hero and heroine brother and sister, a union which he thought a beautiful one, probably having in mind those of Mausolus and Artemisia and Bernice and Evergetes.

Writing to Maria Gisborne he said: "Incest may be the excess of love or hate. It may be the defiance of every thing for the sake of another."

One of the few copies of the poem sent out had found its way to the *Quarterly Review*, and, as Peacock wrote: "The opportunity was readily seized of pouring out on it one of the most malignant effusions of the *odium theologicum* that ever appeared even in those days." Shelley could not find another publisher, but for long he refused to make any change in the poem. At last, acceding to the entreaties of his friends, he submitted to certain alterations, but insisted that it was thereby spoiled. The title was subsequently altered to *The Revolt of Islam*.

Thomas Love Peacock, the poet and novelist, was Shelley's friend and neighbour, but I have been unable to discover his residence; indeed Marlow seems to know little of either. Recently when trying to obtain a photograph of Shelley's house, and information as to Peacock's, I was met by a disconcerting reply; my informant said that he did not think either was living now.

In No. 24 Holles Street, London, Lord Byron was born on the twenty-second day of January, 1788. The house was, in the 'eighties, tenanted by an ex-butler and his wife, a comfortable couple, with whom I lodged. Trade has invaded Holles Street now, and No. 24 and other contemporary houses have disappeared, but on the second story of the former there is a bronze bust of the poet with the inscription:—

Byron
Born Here
1788.

The bust, by Mr. Taylorson, which seems to have been modelled from the portrait painted by R. Westall, R.A., was erected by Mr. John Lewis, the owner of the property, in 1930. It does not appear that Byron ever referred to his birthplace, of which he could have no recollection, as his mother took him to Scotland while he was still an infant.

There are other memorials of Byron in the West End of London. Of the feeble bronze statue by Belt, which stands in Hamilton Gardens, Trelawny wrote

(and who was better qualified to judge than he?) "It does not in the least resemble Lord Byron in face or figure. Thorwaldsen's statue is the best resemblance that exists of the 'Pilgrim of Eternity,' as Shelley designated him."

Thorwaldsen's marble statue, now in Trinity College, Cambridge, was refused admittance to Westminster Abbey, which caused Lord Brougham to assert in the House of Lords that the action of the Abbey authorities was "discreditable alike to our reason, our national taste, and our good sense." In 1834, 1875, and again in 1924, requests for the erection of a memorial in the Abbey were refused and the *Rock* in 1875, denounced Disraeli's advocacy of the proposal as follows: "a career like his should be kept in all possible obscurity. . . . The proposal to erect a national monument to Byron amounts almost to a national sin."

Ecclesiastical intolerance remains unchanged; Byron's many fine qualities and his final sacrifice are cast aside when the account of his life is weighed by Deans and Chapters. And yet, as one who was present at the poet's funeral wrote: "Look round the walls, and on the floor over which you tread, and behold them encumbered and inscribed with memorials of the mean and sordid and the impure as well as of the virtuous and the great. If Byron had no claim to lie within the consecrated precincts of the Abbey, he had no right to lie in consecrated ground at all."

EDGAR SYERS

(To be continued)

Personality and Will

As against the theological view of a soul making a free choice between Right and Wrong, we have contended that the way we behave is the expression of our built-up character. Confronted with a given situation the person with a deficiency of thyroid will react differently from one with a normal supply. In this the analogy with inanimate objects is not to be escaped. To say that man has part control over his own destiny is not to predicate something that does not apply to the non-living world, in which every object in virtue of its size, shape and composition, makes its own contribution to the flux of events. To the same stimulus two differently constructed objects will respond each in accordance with its qualities, just as a person recovered from sleepy sickness may exhibit moral laxity in a situation which would leave a normal person unaffected.

Instead of being mysteriously conferred from above, human personality, one of the most complex phenomena we know, is therefore one of the most dependent on conditions. Organization depends on nervous activity, whose unit is the neurone. We rise in the scale through the simple reflex, the conditioned reflex, the more complicated reflexes, all finally subserving the functions of the higher conscious activities: differences in the factors and their relationships result in different individuals (see R. Gordon's *Personality*), some honest, some dishonest, some kind, some cruel, and so on.

The various functions in the brain are blended into a dynamic unity by the nervous arrangements. Interfere with any particular part, say the nervous arrangements for the co-ordination of the muscles of speech, and the corresponding function, in this case articulation, suffers accordingly. Just as the personality has been built up, so it can be broken down, as in anaesthesia. The highest, latest, most complex functions go first and then the others, layer by layer. First, the

stream of thought becomes incoherent, then reason and reflection go. Poisoning of the cortical cells destroys awareness. Self-consciousness disappears and later the various reflexes are lost. But the person is still alive. Yet if the anaesthetic be too intense even the molecular form involving life is disturbed and the person dies. Are we to suppose that this means the release of the personality and its eventual continuance in another state? If a little anaesthesia interferes with personality and breaks it up, does too much, which kills it, restore it in full bloom elsewhere? And since that restoration obviously does not occur in the corpse, and hence does not utilize the same conditions, how can it be a continuance of the same personality?

But, persists the theologian, nothing is ever lost. If you hold the indestructibility of substance you must likewise hold the indestructibility of spirit. If the candle of life is blown out the gaseous matter of the candle light will persist in another state.

The analogy is not, however, devastating. The point is, that the matter, or energy, which helped to condition the flame no longer conditions the flame. And similarly the matter, or energy, which, prior to death, conditioned a human personality no longer does so.

The knowledge that a phenomenon, whether a personality or a flame or a brick or a table, does not exist in its own right, is destructive of the theological contention that there is a presumably detachable soul or ego which possesses the power of free choice between given alternatives. Actually there is no warrant for positing a simple act of choice as something most inaccessible to scientific analysis; composing a melody or writing a poem is far more complex. But it would indeed be strange if determinism, operative for the remainder of mental life, starting with the material basis of heredity in the chromosomes, were suddenly suspended in volition. Such would throw the whole causal machinery out of gear. It would mean that all that goes to make volition possible has after all nothing to do with it. The act of making a choice has a history of causation ending with the agitation of particles of nervous tissue in the brain. But no scientist would suppose that agitation to start without a cause.

Why, then, talk of "free" will. What greater freedom could be imagined than that our desires and actions should be the expression of our own built-up character? If they are more than this, if they are somehow pumped in from an outside source, to that extent they are not ours at all. We must either believe in determinism or moral irresponsibility and caprice.

We find a starving man and give him food. The determinist says this action springs from a good training, a healthy physiological condition, appropriate environment and perhaps advantageous hereditary tendencies. It is *because* we are well trained, *because* we are physiologically sound, *because* we possess the wherewithal, that we are able to act as we do. It is *cause* all the time. But the voluntarist, the believer in free will, says, nothing of the kind. We didn't do the kind deed at all. Mr. Free Will did it. Mr. Free Will is not tied down by causes and conditions. Sometimes he steals, sometimes he is honest, sometimes cruel, sometimes kind. But whatever he does, nothing causes him to do it. He merely explodes spontaneously, one way or the other. It is always a toss-up which line he takes. For two pins he would have given the man a black eye.

G. H. TAYLOR

To think ill of mankind, and not wish ill to them, is perhaps the highest wisdom and virtue.—*Hazlitt*.

The National Temple of the Muses

THE British Museum is an opulent treasury of past and present culture. Its vast and invaluable library may not contain so great an accumulation of manuscripts as the Paris collection, yet it possesses more printed books than any competitor. The Guide Books provided by the Bloomsbury Institution are many and varied, and, are replete with important information and instruction. Recently, however, Mr. W. H. Boulton has penned a volume¹ which presents a fascinating bird's eye view of the multifarious treasures exhibited in the national temple of the muses which are displayed free of charge to all who desire to visit its Rooms and Galleries.

Boulton's book is prefaced by a foreword from Sir Frederick Kenyon, a former Director and Principal Librarian of the Museum. In this the work is commended as a preparation for intending visitors. For the author's personal opinions Sir Frederick takes no responsibility. Rationalists are certain to reject some of Boulton's contentions, but these are few and merely incidental, and scarcely detract from the value of his volume.

Museums existed in antiquity both in Babylon and Assyria, but the most famous was at Alexandria in Egypt. This was founded about 283 B.C., and was a stately Pagan temple as well as a great repository of literary art. It long served as a centre of enlightenment, until Christianity triumphed, when a rescript of the Roman Emperor, Theodosius ordered the destruction of the Pagan images it contained, and the Archbishop of Alexandria, who officiated in this Vandalism, not only shattered the idols and other works of art, but also ravaged its magnificent library which, in Gibbon's words, "was pillaged or destroyed; and nearly twenty years afterwards the appearance of the empty shelves excited the regret and indignation of every spectator whose mind was not totally darkened by religious prejudice." (*Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, Chap xxviii.).

Montague House in Bloomsbury was converted into the British Museum in 1759. Sir Hans Sloane's collection of natural history specimens, objects of art, books and manuscripts was purchased by the Government at a price far below its original cost, and stored in its new home. In 1847, what is now the main building was completed on its present site. With a frontage of 375 feet and a colonnade of 44 columns bearing a pediment carved with figures representing the march of civilization, the edifice presents a majestic appearance. In truth, it has been stated that, at the time of its erection, never "since the days of Trajan and Hadrian had such stones been used as those recently employed at the British Museum, where eight hundred stones from five to nine tons in weight form the front. Even St. Paul's Cathedral contains no approach to this magnitude."

The earlier conditions for admission appear farcical to-day, as ticket-holders only were eligible. Applicants had to submit their names, addresses and station in life to the Librarian and, if deemed "proper to be admitted," tickets were issued which enabled visitors in very small numbers to inspect the exhibits. When a group had spent an hour in one department a bell announced its expiration. This ridiculous system occasioned considerable delay, and intending visitors were long on the waiting list. It appears that during 1808, 13,000 people only entered the Museum. So two years later, on three days of the week, admission was granted to all "persons of decent appearance" who applied between 10 and 2 o'clock.

¹ *The Romance of the British Museum*, Sampson Low.

Later, in 1833, in his place in Parliament, that stormy petrel of Politics, William Cobbett, denounced the British Museum as a wicked waste of public money. "Why," demanded Cobbett, "should tradesmen and farmers be called upon to pay for the support of a place which was intended only for the amusement of the curious and the rich, and not for the benefit and instruction of the poor? . . . For his own part he did not know where the British Museum was, nor did he know much of the contents of it but from the little he had heard of it, even if he knew where it was he would not take the trouble of going to see it." Shortly afterwards, Cobbett's ignorance seems slightly alleviated, for he then described the Museum as "the old curiosity shop in Great Russell Street."

With the subsequent improvements in its administration, sadly handicapped as the Museum has sometimes been for lack of funds, it has become the priceless instrument of public advantage which it is to-day. Indeed, in 1929, an average year, nearly one and a quarter million people visited and inspected its vast and varied treasures.

The circular Reading Room provides ample and pleasurable accommodation for 458 readers. Its splendid dome is second only in dimensions to that of the Pantheon in Rome, while its many miles of shelves are loaded with four million volumes, 65,000 of which are on the open shelves. The yearly increase is between 30,000 and 40,000 volumes, and according to Arundell Esdaile some 350,000 continuations: newspapers, magazines, music, etc., are added annually.

In the Reading Room an immense amount of literary research is conducted, where practically the entire literature of the world is available for reference or study. Among its earlier visitors were Walter Scott and Charles Lamb, and countless men of letters from every clime have visited it since its opening. Many are the lady readers to-day, yet it appears that its only female frequenter a century since was Mrs. Macaulay.

Among the Museum's innumerable documents are the manuscripts of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Adam Bede*, *the Forsyte Saga* and other famous modern writings. There are preserved six signatures of Shakespeare, while, among the memorials of other illustrious men, those of Erasmus, Galileo, Voltaire and Goethe may be seen. Ancient, medieval and modern times are all richly represented. The papyri from Old Egypt are perhaps the most venerable documents.

The original Magna Charta parchment is no longer on view. As the light tended to fade the writing, a facsimile is now exhibited. Another celebrated document is the Bull of Innocent III., ratifying King John's grant of his dominions to the Papacy in recognition of which His Holiness placed the realms of England and Ireland under the protection of St. Peter, while restoring them "in fee on condition of public recognition and oath of fealty by each successive ruler at his coronation."

The Roman Galleries contain the busts of Julius Cæsar, Augustus, and among others, that of the great Tiberius. But these, as works of art, are completely eclipsed by the matchless memorials of ancient Greece. These include the representations of Homer, Pericles, Alexander and Socrates, while the superb Elgin Marbles compel astonishment, admiration and wonderment.

In the splendid Egyptian Galleries the civilization and culture of a hoary past are revealed. Old Nile's activities are shown in its ivories, ceramics, glass and domestic appliances, while among its various papyri is preserved the Egyptian *Tale of Two Brothers*, which is plainly the original of the Biblical legend of Joseph and Potiphar's spouse.

Although not so popular as the Egyptian exhibits, those of Assyria and Babylonia are richly represented, while Carthage, Palmyra, Syria, Persia and Palestine are not forgotten. Also, the Hittite sculptures, bas-reliefs and other remains recall another long vanished civilization.

Utensils from the early Christian catacombs are on view. The Buddhist section illustrates this religion in the various communities it has influenced. There are statues of the Enlightened One from India, Java, Japan and other Eastern lands, and the collection from Tibet contains rosaries, praying-wheels and prayer-rolls. India's innumerable gods and cults are extensively displayed especially those relating to Hinduism. The Moslem faith furnishes little, as all artistic portrayals of Allah or the human form were prohibited, but a magnificent copy of the Koran is shown which was once the property of the old Royal House of Delhi. There are splendid standards and a silk banner displaying the sword of Ali, Mohammed's son-in-law.

The Jewish exhibition is meagre. The Hebrews were forbidden to portray their deity or much else artistically, but the Ram's Horn blown at the New Year and on the Day of Atonement, as well as a set of Phylacteries may be seen. There is also a service of ritual instruments with which the Rabbis perform the rite of circumcision.

The customs and beliefs of non-European peoples are illustrated in the Ethnographical Collections in the British, although the multitudinous natural history specimens have been long housed in the priceless Museum in Cromwell Road, South Kensington. The military accoutrements of Japan are extensively represented in the Bloomsbury Collection, but the peoples of Northern and Central Asia are far less elaborately exhibited. The monuments from Easter Island serve to deepen the mystery of that Polynesian retreat. Discovered in 1721; its population has since decreased from 3,000 to 100. On platforms of massive masonry, great stone structures were long since erected, while images, some of which exceed 20 feet in height have been sculptured from lava. For some unknown reason these monuments have been defaced and overthrown and the larger ones are estimated to weigh more than 100 tons. As Boulton notes: "When it is borne in mind that Easter Island is only twelve miles long; has no large trees and no running water; that it is more than 2,000 miles from the mainland, and more than 1,000 miles from the nearest archipelago, one cannot but wonder how these strange memorials of a forgotten past came to be made."

The African exhibits are extensive and peculiar, and embrace an enormous Continent containing native communities of the most varied character. The Eskimos in the American department and the Indian tribes who dwell on the North West coast from Alaska to Vancouver attract attention. Mexico and its environs are illustrated by remains of a fine culture ruthlessly destroyed by the Catholic invaders from Spain. The even more remarkable civilization of Peru was ravaged by Pizarro and his successors, but many of its memorials are preserved in the Museum. The ruined structures of Maya, a culture that preceded the Mexican, have been restored, and after 13 years' research among the ruins of ancient Mexico, Guatemala and Honduras, a splendid collection has been assembled depicting the evolution of departed civilizations.

The Museum also possesses a priceless collection of coins and medals, as well as prints and drawings, while hours might be profitably spent in inspecting the choice specimens of pottery and glass of medieval and modern production. Nevertheless, although this superb exhibition of curious and instructive crafts-

manship, with all the other treasures gathered from every part of the world is free to all who care to enter, there are probably millions of London's inhabitants who have never visited the Museum in their lives.

T. F. PALMER

Acid Drops

Thomas Paine placed his hopes for the betterment of the Western world on the formation of a United States of Europe. The end of the war brought us within sight of laying the foundations of such an achievement. Thanks to the substantial help given by our pre-war Governments the League was step by step reduced to nullity. Less than six months ago Mr. Chamberlain was sneering at any possibility of collective action, and instituted a personal form of Government, only one step removed from a Dictatorship, while that ready-to-plead-for-anything-that-suits-the-occasion gentleman, Sir John Simon, also poured scorn on collective action. Now, fooled and misled by Hitler and Mussolini, Mr. Chamberlain and Lord Halifax announce their adherence to a policy of collective action as the only method of meeting a threat to European civilization. A very late conversion! Let us hope that the House of Commons will show enough grit to see that there is no going back on this announcement. We have paid dearly enough already for the policy of appeasing the tiger by feeding him with mutton chops.

Father Thomas Fitzgerald, in an address on "The Child Delinquent" said, as reported in the *Universe* for March 10:—

It has become a recognized fact at the present day that Catholicism is the most popular religion among the criminal classes. That is because the Catholic religion never lets her members down, but holds to them through thick and thin in the interests of their souls.

We believe it is a fact that in proportion to numbers Roman Catholics are over represented in the country's prisons. So far, we agree with Father Fitzgerald. But in the interests of the other branches of Christ's Church, we must say that they are equally active in attending to their members who are in prisons. Father Fitzgerald must know that there is in every prison an official chaplain, and a prison chapel, and that the prisons are visited by the ministers of most religious bodies to look after the souls of their clients. Statistics show that Freethinkers are the only ones who pay out of all proportion for the scanty number that are in prison. It may be fair of the Roman Catholic priest to claim a pre-eminence among criminals for his followers, but it is not fair to claim almost a monopoly. Other religious sects must be given their need of "praise." Meanwhile Freethinkers might ask, If religion does not stop people going to prison, and if it does not prevent their returning to prison, what is the precise value of religion in this respect?

Mr. Shaw Desmond is very disturbed at the way in which Hitler is doing his utmost to "Paganize" Germany by getting hold of the children and drilling into them his "divine" mission as the Leader, or even as the God of a new cult. Mr. Desmond thinks it is all very bad, especially when there is already a real "divine" religion in Christianity. But after all, there does not seem very much difference between the Pope, believed by so many millions of people to be God's right hand and divinely inspired, and Hitler, who thinks he himself is, and who is moving heaven and earth to get other people to believe him. In any case, Mr. Desmond thinks it is about time to take upon himself the role of a Prophet of God, and in a recent number of the *Sunday Express* he lets himself go in this wise:—

The threats of Nazism and Fascism are not going to weaken, but rather to strengthen and cleanse the churches. . . . No finer thing could have happened. . . .

Great Britain, in whose heart the Christian fire had never died, with America, will lead the way in a return to a religion which can be applied to life. Europe is about to witness the greatest revival of all time.

We seem to remember having read similar prophecies a few hundred times within recent years, and the great religious revival is still to come.

How far religion is carrying the message of hope and humanity to the natives in South Africa can be seen in the bitter antagonism shown by many whites to the proposals for the bettering of the lot of the natives in their economic life. A message from a correspondent to the *Church Times* contains the following piquant comments :—

An article in the Roman Catholic *Southern Cross* accused the Dutch Reformed Church of not holding a single Conference or Conferences without issuing warnings against the dangers of "liberalism" in native policy. It says that the forces of ignorance and intolerance are being marshalled to attack those who contend for justice and humanity; and that it is terrible to think that those who fight for toleration and the recognition for the rights of man, are opposed by men who carry the banner of religion. To an outsider it is unintelligible and shocking that a Christian Church should ally itself with those who demand that the colour of a man's skin should decide the opportunities to be given him by the State.

The Dean of St. Paul's believes that :—

On the problem of Providence, God has a purpose for His creation. He has not abandoned the ultimate control of it. And man's co-operation is needed for that purpose's fulfilment and there may be many false turnings, many frustrations, before the fulfilment is attained.

This reminds us very much of Mr. Chamberlain's often professed faith in the honesty of Hitler. Hitler meant well "at the time." God really means well, and has not abandoned ultimate control. But if he has not given up control, why is he so dependent upon mere man? It looks very much as if God is constantly getting into trouble, and has to look to man for getting out of it. Which again reminds one of the Chamberlain-Hitler combination. Chamberlain means well, and looks to Hitler and Mussolini to get him out of it. And then follows, with God and Chamberlain, a series of disappointments.

Sir Kingsley Wood tore himself away from what we should have thought to be the arduous duties of his office as Secretary of State for Air, to attend a "Tea-table Conference" at Wesley Chapel. The Air Ministry is to be congratulated on possessing so optimistic a Head who in a rather boring eulogy of Wesley praised the "lovely Hymn which was Wesley's swan-song and begins: All Glory to God in the Skies"! We wonder what God "in the skies" thinks of A.R.P. And we wonder also what Sir Kingsley had in his mind when he assured his congregation that Wesley was the Universal Provider of British Perfection, or as the Rev. Minister for Air put it :—

Wesley was an optimist. He was an ardent flame, busy up and down England, preaching the Gospel which spiritually quickened the entire race. Methodism is the least result of his work, for he lives again in the new vitality he gave to England in its spiritual awakening, in the poetry, art, milder laws, more enlightened education and the social reforms which are seen everywhere.

Of course Sir Kingsley Wood said this of Wesley at a Methodist meeting. Had it been a political one he would probably have said the same things, but Mr. Chamberlain, would have taken the place of Wesley.

The Rev. Hugh Martin told a meeting of the Christian Movement, that it was not very wise to spend so much on foreign missions when so many in our own land were turning their backs on religion. This looks like a religious form of the commercial policy of restricting foreign trade in the interests of home industry. Mr. Martin thinks we are less evangelized than India. May-

be, but what a compliment to the influence of a religion that has been so subsidized and forced upon people as Christianity has been.

Dr. Vascher Burch's new book on the Book of Revelation (*Anthropology and the Apocalypse*) will be, or at least ought to be, the last kick of anything approaching the Fundamentalist view of one of the most lunatic of "inspired Scriptures." Dr. Burch believes it was written by the author of the Fourth Gospel, whose name was John. Like the classic Hilly-Billy of the Bible Belt during the Scopes trial, Dr. Burch accepts every word—almost—"from cover to cover." He declines to accept the commonsense conclusion that this nightmare prophecy was written by Mother Shipton's ancestor. The writer says John was "a Semitic Apocalyptist set upon a very sensitive apprehension of the revelation of his Lord." Sensitive—but far from sensible. Might not "Semitic epileptic" be a very suitable reading?

The Bible is getting exposed in the most unlikely quarters. Eventually even the most commonplace Christian will learn that whatever inspiration God gave the authors of the Gospels did not prevent the most utter confusion in the presentation of His Holy Word to mankind. The orthodox *British Weekly* has a headline.

Two Parables Mixed Up.

It shows that Luke xix. and Matthew xxv. are in a hopeless jumble :—

It seems clear that parables, originally separate, did get entangled together in the tradition before the evangelists incorporated them in their Gospels. Our best line of exposition will be then, to disentangle and then expound.

It seems to us highly invidious to allude to a single case of "Bible tangles" when the whole Book of God is a perfect jungle of jumbles.

Here is an unsolicited testimonial from the *British Weekly*: "The world has seen many brilliant men who have been too clever to be Christian." May we return the implied compliment by expressing our sincere belief that many brilliant men have been far too venal to deny a remunerative untruth?

"Many a true word" is spoken by parsons off their guard, or as one of our contributors put it "Truth will out—even in a Church." Dr. Sidney Berry—for years a leader of the Congregational body—has been talking rather freely about the mentality of the pew occupiers. He thinks :—

One of the weaknesses of our Churches is the fact that so many of our people don't know what is going on outside the walls of their own building. Those who sit in the pews must read more if they would know more of men and movements in the Free Churches and, needless to say, the Churches would benefit by such knowledge.

But we doubt whether matters will be improved if the only knowledge sought by more widespread reading is to be confined to learning what other ignoramuses in other churches are doing.

Fifty Years Ago

WHAT we do not understand now, will be cleared up hereafter. When we are dead we shall be enlightened. God acts very capriciously, and often very cruelly, according to our carnal judgment; but he will explain his ways to us when we meet him in heaven. What is this but the priests' eternal confidence trick? He creates a mystery, and trades upon it; raises a dust, and takes advantage of our blindness. Fortunately the world is tired of this delusion. Man is throwing off the fetters of creeds, and refusing to smoke the priest's opium. He is turning away from God and looking to Nature. He is learning that his salvation must be upon earth, that Science is power, and Fraternity is inspiration.

The Freethinker, March 24, 1889

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- JACK BARTON.—Pleased to hear from you; hope you are well. There is no absurdity too great for credence when it is offered as a religion. Jew or Gentile makes little difference in that respect. Could anything, for example, be more ridiculous than the carrying of the Pope dressed in a manner that reminds one of a huge Guy Fawkes figure *en route* for Hampstead, and described by our press as "impressive," "solemn," etc!
- J. McRALL.—There is no exception to the rule that one may find men of high conviction and convinced honesty linked up with the most absurd beliefs. One can admire the courage displayed by the Covenanters, and their loyalty to their opinions, without having the least sympathy with these opinions. One of the chief counts against religion is the degree to which it exploits good qualities in the interests of crass superstition.
- J. BLACKBURN (S. Africa).—Many thanks for obtaining a new reader.
- J. HAYES, J. BRIMELOW, D. J. CONDON, H. JOHNSON, and M. FELDMAN.—Thanks for addresses of likely new readers; paper being sent for four weeks.
- To Advertising and Distributing the Freethinker.—Cine Cere, 78. 3d.
- J. HUMPHREY.—Thanks for cutting.
- T. CROMPTON.—You must make up your mind that clear thinking depends upon hard reading allied to natural capacity. It is useless hoping to produce good matter merely by sitting down and thinking things over. It is almost as bad as the policy of "mugging-up."
- J. MEERLOO.—Your reminiscences are very interesting. Thanks.
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4, and not to the Editor.
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."
- The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.
- The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/0.
- The offices of the National Secular Society and the Secular Society Limited, are now at 68 Farringdon Street, London E.C.4. Telephone: Central 1367.
- Lecture notices must reach 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4 by the first post on Tuesday, or they will not be inserted.

Sugar Plums

Mr. Cohen visits Glasgow to-day (March 26). He will be lecturing in the McLellan Galleries, 270 Sauchiehall Street, on "Freethought and To-day." The doors are open at 6.30 p.m., and the chair will be taken at 7.0 prompt. Admission will be free, but there will be reserved seats.

Dr. E. Emery writes:—

Permit me to thank you for your last week's "Views and Opinions." It is the neatest and most convincing exposure of a theological absurdity that I have come across for some time. Could it not be put into a form that would make it suitable for general distribution? I should be pleased to contribute towards the cost of this being done.

Recently we have received letters from two West Country towns, that certain newsagents have refused to supply copies of the *Freethinker* when ordered. We do not give names because often this refusal is a consequence of threats to the newsagent. But while we do not like the weapons of the boycott we think that in these circumstances Freethinkers are justified in declining to deal with any newsagent who sets himself up as a censor of the reading of his customers. Occasionally those who wish to order the *Freethinker* for the first time are told that the paper has ceased to appear. We hope that anyone who knows of this being said will acquaint us at once. Legal action will at once be taken.

Meanwhile, we hope that all our friends will help us fight both the financial difficulties which stand in the way of effective advertising and the boycott, by doing what they can to commend this paper to likely subscribers. The paper has always involved a financial loss, and during recent years the expense of publishing has substantially increased. And when deficit number two has to be met out of deficit number one, the problem is not an easy one to solve. We do not believe that work is ever very likely to hurt us, but worry, and particularly the miserable worry of making financial ends meet is another question. So let us, if we can, create a substantial increase in the number of our subscribers.

One of the principal reporters, Mr. William Hickey, of the *Daily Express*, commences a descriptive article in the issue for March 1 as follows:—

We know how things are in Central Europe; it may surprise some to hear that in London, already, a journalist cannot safely go to a public political meeting.

The article is concerned with a meeting held by Sir Oswald Mosley and his army of gallant blackshirts. After the address came questions. Mr. Hickey notes that whenever Mosley found interest flagging he could always mention Jews, and as the name was mentioned there were "howls and roars of exultant hatred." The questions were taken by a Mr. Raven Thompson, the Fascist political director.

Suddenly some one asked, "What is Mr. William Hickey doing at the press table?" Then the uproar commenced. Mr. Hickey says, "I have been present at many scenes of violence, but I don't think I have ever heard such bestially savage cries and yells." Someone called out that Mr. Hickey was a Jew (He is not). Mr. Raven Thompson said that in return for being invited to their meetings the press might do more than it did. One can appreciate the significance of "doing more for them." Then a steward came along and whispered to Mr. Hickey that he should leave by a side-door. Mr. Hickey asked what was wrong with the main door. The steward replied, "Well, some of the boys might get rough." As he left Mr. Hickey said, "I should have thought your chaps would be better disciplined." Mr. Thompson replied, "They will be, but you know what they are." Mr. Hickey says he does. They are at any rate good Nazis. An example of what we may expect the new Nazi Institute to turn out.

The *Listener* prints a letter from Mr. John Johnson of of Gourceek, "protesting against the dogmatic tone of the talk by Maurice L. Jacks," on Religion in Education. Mr. Johnson's protest is reasonable and well-timed. He thinks that "the more religion is kept out of education the better," and is bitterly satirical about those "homes fantastically described as 'kingdoms of Heaven in miniature.'" Mr. Johnson knows some of them only too well. He says "I would describe them as soul-stunting little chambers of horror." Mr. Johnson is willing to admit that a Church may be "the spiritually-poor man's substitute for art" (which may have been true when the best collections of art were in private palaces), but the school and the university are in Mr. Johnson's view "the training ground for the free development of the mind."

More Essays in Freethinking

Essays in Freethinking, by Chapman Cohen, Fifth Series.

I REMEMBER when I saw the score or so of Mr. Cohen's articles—appearing as the First Series of *Essays in Freethinking*—I was struck with their novelty, both of outlook and expression. I soon discovered their usefulness, and express now my indebtedness thereto.

The Fifth volume now before me offers the same pleasant impression, but, as the Americans say, with "more kick in it." I think that each of the five series shows an advance on its predecessors. Dare I say that the author is a young man of great promise still!

In each volume there are Essays which are properly describable as propaganda. In this series, as in others, some of the articles—reprinted from the *Freethinker*—are far from being mere propaganda, and yet not a single one of them can be ignored by Secularist propagandists. The most valuable chapters are those which are creative and stimulating rather than a direct support of propagandist ideology. The "Views and Opinions" Mr. Cohen gives us each week—and particularly those reprinted—are (or can be made) the root of propaganda rather than the expression of it.

It is not true that no reader is going to suffer discomfort in reading these Essays. There is always something disquieting about new ideas and the scientific application of science (not quite the same thing as an abstract belief in science) to all religious, social and political problems. As we read such an essay as "Woman and Christianity," we begin to understand why we call propaganda an "agitation." That essay (and others here reprinted) will probably "agitate" Dean Matthews out of his customary suavity. The Bishop of London will curse and swear in the Psalmist's worst words when he reads the polite but devastating study called "God Made the Weather." Mrs. Northcote who advocates some degree of "Justice to Women" (in the pulpit) will find little comfort in Mr. Cohen's treatment of historic Christianity—as tested by injustices to women evidenced by the Churches' current practice.

But before we Secularists swell with pride as we reflect on our open-mindedness, we had better turn to Mr. Cohen's essay on that eloquent Mystic, Maurice Maeterlinck, whose "Before the Great Silence" receives an unexpected tribute of appreciation. Mr. Cohen does not regard himself as specially courageous in praising one whose whole writings are in a language cordially detested by many Materialists—to their loss, I think. After all Maeterlinck declares without ambiguity of the dead, "that none of them has ever returned," and Mr. Cohen quotes sufficient to warrant our regarding "Before the Great Silence" as a magnificent summary of arguments which Mr. Cohen himself has used very effectually in his book: *The Other Side of Death*.

"All Sorts of Ideas" is about education, and it is education—for Secularists as well as religionists, if any Secularist regards children as "raw material to be welded and shaped into something as near resembling ourselves as we can make them." The indictment of the Church in regard to Medical Science is thorough and convincing. "Man's Greatest Enemy" is a fascinating argument for self-study: it is not the "mob" or the church, it is OURSELF we must fight if we would be effective reformers.

In this excellently produced volume you will find something people call "literary English," and better still you will find commonsense plain straightforward readable English, devoted to the greatest of all arts—the art of telling the truth and telling it well.

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

Flashbacks on Tyneside

(Continued from page 173)

BEFORE the advent of the Man of Arran, Tyneside had earned quite a reputation for sending to Westminster men who held the Gods in scorn. We have already spoken of the radical Joseph Cowen who, in his earlier days at least, was the warm friend of revolutionaries either at home or abroad. Ashton Dilke was another who, at one time, had been the Member for Newcastle, and he was one of the few men who had plainly stated in the House of Commons itself that he had no belief in Christianity. His radicalism had earned the admiration of G. W. Foote, for I remember how warmly on Dilke's death he wrote of him and his work for unpopular causes. And then there was John Morley, the man who avowedly set about the work of destroying religion by "explaining" it, perhaps the most prominent Tyneside political figure of all. A little North of Newcastle the Borough of Morpeth was represented by Thomas Burt, the first genuine "working man" who ever entered the British House of Commons. Burt was never a Freethinker (accepting the word in its historic implications), but he endeared himself to Freethinkers by his warm friendship with Charles Bradlaugh, and the substantial nature of the assistance he gave to that great man in his parliamentary struggle. When Burt stood for Morpeth in 1874, Bradlaugh in the *National Reformer*, for the guidance of his followers, gave a list of names of men he wished particularly to be returned to the House and "Lo, the name of Burt led all the rest." Those acquainted with the history of those stormy times know how Bradlaugh had to be escorted from Blyth Links after speaking at one of the Miners' Demonstrations by a bodyguard of stalwarts (Thomas Dixon, *per se*, was one of them) to protect him from physical molestation. Burt sheltered and gave hospitality to Bradlaugh on one of these occasions (at an early period of Bradlaugh's career) when all other local accommodation was denied him.

Burt's first election committee contained the names of Joseph Cowen, W. E. Adams, Ralph Young, and Dr. James Trotter of Bedlington. The heroic Conservative candidate was one Capt. Francis Duncan. I cull the following from W. E. Adams' *Memoirs of a Social Atom* (Vol II., p. 546):—

Captain Duncan was everywhere respectfully received by miners. When he addressed a meeting at Choppington, not a murmur of opposition was heard from the crowded audience; but when a vote of approval of his candidature was proposed, every hand was held up against it, and the proceedings closed with a vote of thanks to Captain Duncan for his lecture.

This is a simple piece of objective writing which, to me, proved astonishingly impressive. I think Adams would have spoiled it by adding any reflections, and I accept his guidance.

Before this election the whole of the miners had been without the vote, owing to their not being considered as "householders," but in 1873 all of the collier claimants were put on the voter's list. The result of the election was thus a foregone conclusion, and Burt "romped home." I don't think Burt ever accepted defeat at Morpeth, in spite of the fact that in his later contests he hardly ever made a speech in his constituency. He was an old man, then, and his shining record told.

Dr. Spence Watson was universally acknowledged at that time to be the most influential liberal who was outside the House of Commons. He was a Quaker, but like many of that body, his alignment with the current religion of the day was a perpetual puzzle to

his friends. There was once a leading article in the *Newcastle Daily Chronicle* criticizing Spence Watson, entitled "Our Agnostic Quaker." Watson's work for the Sunday Lecture Society was after his own heart. I heard of his "Bringing down the house" at the Tyne Theatre on one occasion, by describing how he had met at a Paris Exhibition one Sunday, a leading Newcastle Sabbatarian Councillor. He said to Watson, "What! You here!" And continued Watson, "I said to him 'What! you here?'" My last recollection of Spence Watson was when he, very, very ill, had insisted on attending the Annual Meeting of the Tyneside Sunday Lecture Society. Frail and pathetic was his figure, and the voice that had stirred vast audiences all over England was scarcely audible. A week or two afterwards he was dead.

It will be seen, then, that J. M. Robertson as a militant Freethinker was fighting no "forlorn hope" when he determined to contest the Tyneside Division of Northumberland. The quality of his sponsors can be gauged by the fact that soon after he had been chosen by them a Yorkshire paper came out with a catalogue of Mr. Robertson's sins—real and imaginary—in the familiar Christian style. Mr. Robertson brought a libel action against the paper and failed. He immediately tendered his resignation to the Election Committee, but the Committee promptly refused to accept it. The Bradlaugh tradition was paramount on that Committee; it was sufficient for them to know that Robertson had edited the *National Reformer*, and edited it well, on Bradlaugh's death. They knew his attributes and knew the quality of the opposition that such attributes invariably provoke.

Robertson was much on Tyneside prior to the General Election "nursing his constituency." He lectured very frequently. Freethinkers from all over the north attended these meetings. They formed a unique political fare. Robertson seemed to be able to elucidate any political or sociological theme. The audience listened throughout, applause coming at the end. Ralph Chapman and Joseph Pothergill must, I am sure, have attended scores upon scores of J.M.'s lectures. Ralph was the most politically-minded, I think, of all the Newcastle secularists. When he heard the usual remarks about "political chicanery" he used to say, "Come in yourself and help to make it better." Pothergill had a similar point of view. Those who attended the N.S.S. Conferences in those days would always see Pothergill in his place. There was passion in Joe's adherence to Freethought though it was the last thing the person who only slightly knew him would suspect.

Robertson entered the House of Commons in the 1906 election, that election which almost wiped out, temporarily, the Conservative Party in this country. I may be wrong, but I think about seventy members of the House elected that year to "affirm" instead of taking the oath, a piece of history which is worthy of keeping in memory. Robertson was in my own Parliamentary Division. The following story I can vouch for, and it may be useful in giving a point of practical guidance.

A Conservative canvasser called at the house of one of my great personal friends at Gosforth. "Do you know, sir?" he explained, "Mr. Robertson is an Atheist?" "What!" ejaculated the voter. "Yes, an Atheist." "Are you sure of that?" queried my friend. "I am," was the response. "Certain?" "Absolutely certain." "All right then," went on my friend, "I'll vote for him"—and he shut the door.

Robertson can be said to have won the seat on his capable Free Trade advocacy alone. His championship of this cause became more than a Tyneside affair; it became recognized nationally. His debate with

Samuel Storey on the subject in Olympia, Newcastle, was a great event. So anxious were the Free Traders for this debate to materialize that I know the committee were instructed to agree to almost any requirements that Mr. Storey cared to make. This explained why it was that those who attended the second night of the debate were surprised to find that, after even-time had been allotted the combatants, Mr. Storey was allowed an extra speech. The effect that announcement made upon the audience enlightened me as to the folly of insisting upon "even-handed justice" on these occasions. Labouring under an obvious handicap, deliberately applied, has often the effect of weighting the scales on the side of justice.

I question whether Robertson ever experienced any public triumph equal to this one. Crowds followed him to the Liberal Club after the debate, where he said "a few words" from the balcony. He was obviously much moved and so were many of his hearers. From that same balcony years before I had seen John Morley, pale and shaken to the depths, stutter out a few words after a surprising landslide, which meant his political farewell to Newcastle-on-Tyne.

Whether fighting Freethinkers should enter Parliament is a theme upon which much can be said in either direction. Nothing need be said here on the point. But I think it will be appropriate, and interesting, to quote here a paragraph from Mr. J. A. Spender, taken from his life of Hudson, the organizer at one time of the National Liberal Federation. I have never seen it previously quoted:—

Sir George Lunn resigned at the end of the year [1918] and was succeeded by Mr. J. M. Robertson, a former member of Mr. Asquith's Government and by common consent one of the ablest and most gifted members of the Liberal Party. On most subjects except politics President and Secretary [Sir Robert Hudson] held opinions about as divergent as opinions could well be, the one being a conscientious secularist and the other a strong Churchman but, as in the case of Edward Clodd, this was no bar to warm friendship and the strongest mutual respect. Robertson's learning and wide range of interests made a special appeal to Robert and he always spoke of gratitude and affection of his three years' association with him.

The words of Mr. Spender are always well-considered, which makes the tribute doubly valuable. The contrast between Sir Robert Hudson and such modern Christian political gladiators as dear Captain Ramsay is also a matter for the mind to dwell upon a while.

T. H. ELSTOB

(To be concluded)

The Cursing of the Fig Tree

A STUDY IN CHRISTIAN APOLOGETICS

Now in the morning as he returned to the city, he hungered, and seeing a fig tree by the way side, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only; and he saith unto it, let there be no fruit from thee henceforward for ever. And immediately the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying: How did the fig tree immediately wither away? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, if ye have faith and doubt not, ye shall not only do what is done to the fig tree, but even if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea, it shall be done. And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive. Matthew xxi. 18-22, R.V. And on the morrow, when they were come out from Bethany, he hungered. And seeing a fig tree afar off having leaves, he came, if haply he might find anything thereon: and when he came to

it, he found nothing but leaves; for it was not the season of figs. And he answered and said unto it, No man eat fruit from thee henceforward for ever. And the disciples heard it. . . . [They all went to Jerusalem, and returned thence in the evening, intending to go thither again the next day]. And as they passed by in the morning, they saw the fig tree withered away from the roots. And Peter calling to remembrance saith unto him, Rabbi, behold, the fig tree which thou cursedst is withered away. And Jesus answering saith unto them, have faith in God. Verily I say unto you, Whosoever shall say unto this mountain, Be thou taken up and cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that what he saith cometh to pass; he shall have it. Therefore I say unto you, all things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them. Mark xi. 12-14 and 20-24, R.V.

It is doubtful if throughout the ages, any person, human or divine, has ever been alleged to have done or said aught so stupid as Jesus is recorded to have done and said on the occasion when, according to *Matthew* and *Mark*, he cursed a fig tree because of its barrenness, and declared that whatsoever was believingly prayed for would be received. The above accounts have a fairly close agreement; but on one very important point, *Matthew* differs from *Mark*, which there appears to present the earlier of the two traditions.¹

Mark says that the fig tree, having been cursed one morning in the presence of the disciples, was discovered by them the next morning in a withered state; whilst *Matthew* asserts that the withering followed immediately upon the cursing, and occurred under the very eyes of the amazed disciples. This difference is of importance, not merely as proving the conflicting character of statements claimed to have been equally inspired by a God of truth; but, also, because if the *Markan* is earlier than the *Matthæan* tradition, the alleged supernatural event becomes capable of various natural explanations. Thus the tree might have been blasted by lightning, or cut round the bottom of the trunk, the heat of an eastern sun being, in the latter case, sufficient to give it a withered appearance after a few hours. Again, on the theory that the account in *Mark* is the elder and more correct version of the story, a clue to the actual nature and sequence of events may perhaps be discovered. Whatever the real intention of Jesus may have been, we are nowhere told that he commanded the tree to wither, perpetual infecundity being the doom which he is said to have pronounced. Now, it is surely possible that after he had in anger uttered the alleged imprecation and gone his way, some accident befell the tree causing it to wither; and its withered state being subsequently observed by the disciples, they, on recalling the curse, believed it to have wrought the destruction; whilst, Jesus, although as surprised as his disciples at the occurrence, pretended to accept it as a matter of course, and proceeded to improve the occasion by a reference to the power of believing prayer. The

¹ The first three Gospels are called the Synoptics, because for the most part they take a common point of view; and there are lengthy passages where some two or even all three of them present a striking similarity of language. The order in which they were produced has been warmly debated during the last hundred and seventy years. One clue often applied by critics is to note in the case of any particular saying or episode, which of the two or of the three accounts appears to contain the more primitive elements; but this clue is enfeebled by the fact that all the synoptics have been more or less interpolated, and that, therefore, although one may be relatively primitive with respect to another as regards date, nevertheless, the second of the two may be more primitive than the first as regards some of their common reports. The present affair seems to be an instance where *Mark* surpasses *Matthew* in primitiveness.

consideration of these natural possibilities suggested by the narrative in *Mark*, may have influenced the writer of the account in *Matthew*, causing him to link the cursing and the withering as events immediately consecutive. It is certainly significant that *Matthew* omits a striking detail supplied by *Mark*, to wit, that, when the tree was cursed, the fig season had not yet arrived, a circumstance likely to make the conduct of Jesus appear still more ridiculous.

For those who regard the incident as historical and explain it as supernatural, let me point out that this assumption does not imply the divinity of Jesus, or even his use of divine power, since his mastery of any occult force, sufficiently strong for the purpose, would be an explanation of the present miracle, or of any other wherewith he is accredited. A further premise which should be made is that all the conclusions deducible from the will of Jesus as distinct from the deed whereby he is alleged to have executed his will, hold equally good whether we supposed that he did, or did not, in a fit of childish rage, blast the fig tree which had occasioned him a trivial disappointment.

Let us consider:—

I. The Conduct of Jesus in relation to the withering of the fig tree.

I. The folly of Jesus in cursing the fig tree:— We read in *Mark* that when Jesus cursed the fig tree for its barrenness, "it was not the season of figs." This would appear to make his action still more extravagant, but the point has been skilfully turned by apologists. Thus it is said that by "the season of figs" is meant the time of their ingathering, not of their ripening, and that hence as the fig tree leafs first and fruits after,² Jesus seeing a leafy tree, and knowing its fruit would not have been harvested, approached to pluck thereof with a confidence he could not have felt had the harvesting season commenced or terminated. This argument, though open to question, is ingenious and perhaps admissible, yet after all hardly worth the learning and labour spent in developing it, for Jesus, if thereby exonerated from the ineptitude of looking for fruit when he must have known there was none, and from the folly of cursing the tree for the lack of what it could not reasonably be expected to have, is, nevertheless, chargeable with the absurdity of treating the defect of an irresponsible thing as if it had been the fault of a responsible person. Nor does the madness end here, for he not only sought to punish where there would be no guilt, but to injure where there could be no feeling.

II. The malice of Jesus in cursing the fig tree.

William Burkitt (+1703), says of Jesus:—

In his passage to the city he espied a fig tree; and, being hungry (to show the truth of his humanity), he goes to the fig tree and finds it full of leaves, but without any fruit. Displeased with this disappointment, he curses the tree which had deceived his expectations. . . . Whereas it is said that *the time of figs was not yet*, the meaning is "the time of ingathering of figs was not yet"; but the tree having leaves, showed it might have fruit; accordingly Christ goes in expectation of its having fruit, but finding none, either ripe or green, he curses the tree for totally disappointing his expectation.

² On this point a friendly critic, Fr. Essemann, corrects me as follows: "The fig tree—*ficus carica*—possesses the peculiarity of producing the fruit *first*, which, of course, in an early state is small and immature, and then the leaves, which later, in tropical and semi-tropical countries serve the useful purpose of affording necessary shade from the heat of the sun, while the fruit is gradually being developed. Had the 'Saviour of the world' been blessed with a little more earthly knowledge and less heavenly, he would have had the good sense not to have been guilty of the egregious blunder under notice."

Dr. Thomas Coke (+1815) remarks:—

Our Lord on his return from Bethany to the Temple in the morning, being hungry, and seeing a very flourishing fig tree, came, expecting to find some figs thereon, for the time of figs was not yet, and therefore he might expect fruit on the tree; but finding none, he cursed the tree in the hearing of his disciples, who take particular notice of it.

Dr Adam Clarke (+1832) asserts that the cursing of the fig tree

was not occasioned by any *resentment* at being *disappointed* at not finding fruit on it, but to *point out* unto his disciples the wrath which was coming upon a people who had now nearly filled up the measure of their iniquity.

C. CLAYTON DOVE

(To be concluded)

Hitler and Jehovah

It is stated that Hitler wrote in *Mein Kampf*: "Today I believe that I act in accordance with the purpose of the Almighty Creator. In keeping the Jew away I fight for the word of the Lord." Of course it is characteristic of religious believers to think that the Lord is on their side, and presumably (if not stated) that the Devil is on the other side, that those who are not for them are against them, and like absurdities. And we may suppose that Hitler derives from such whimsy some encouragement in the pursuit of his bestial course.

Those who abhor Hitler's treatment of the Jews—as doubtless all Freethinkers do—should recognize that he is in a general way following what were supposed to be the ideas, attitudes and commands of the old war-god Jahweh. These included the notions of a "chosen people," a "promised land," and that all who resisted the encroachment of the Hebrews and refused to accept their barbaric religion were to be exterminated with all possible dispatch.

It is hardly needful to say that the vagaries of a small backward people would not have mattered in the least if their literature had not been adopted by the West as "unique, inspired, revealed," and so for some two thousand years exercised its deadly influence on the peoples of Europe. That influence was shown in theory by the writings of the "Angelic Doctor" (Thomas Aquinas), produced in the 13th century, some two thousand years after Elijah had established the practice of religious murder. According to Aquinas heretics are to be regarded as and exterminated like dangerous wild beasts. And more important still is the fact that highly-placed Romanists have quite recently expressed identical views. Within the last half century Cardinal Lepicier and Father de Luca (Professor of Canon Law in the Gregorian University of Rome) have in book or lecture definitely advocated the "power of the sword." In practice, of course, we have all the horrors of the Inquisition and later allied features. And, like Jahweh, both Hitler and the papal church announce in one way or another, that they cannot tolerate rivalry or opposition.

We are reminded of these things by a passage in H. G. Wells' *Anatomy of Frustration*: "... The German Nationalist Movement is essentially Jewish in spirit and origin, it is Bible-born, an imitation of Old Testament nationalism... is inverted Judaism, which has retained the form of the Old Testament and turned it inside out. Hitler never made a speech yet that cannot be rephrased in Bible language. Only a Bible-saturated people in these days, a people ignorant in the mass of modern biology and general history,

could take so easily to national egotism, to systematic xenophobia, to self-righteous ideas of conquest and extermination. . . . The preservation of the Bible as a book sacred beyond criticism has kept alive a tradition of barbaric cunning and barbaric racialism, generation after generation, to the infinite injury of economic and political life."

The Jews are therefore what Wells calls a dissentient group; and only those (racial) members who have shed the superstitious beliefs and practices of orthodox Judaism can duly mix with adequately and participate in the life of the community with which they reside—instead of working for an "inassimilable tribal survival" . . . "Come out of Israel!"

Among other dissentient groups mentioned are Roman Catholics, who, if they are "good" ones, must subordinate political, social and cultural affairs to the spread and domination of their church.

The comparison of Hitler with the old oriental war-god appears in his open proclamation of the necessity for intolerance, terrorism and oppression. In *Mein Kampf* appears the following: "My attitude is that . . . one day a German People's Tribunal shall condemn and execute sundry tens of thousands of those criminals who organized the November treason"—the revolution and founding of the German Republic in 1918.

Again, to quote Wells, "The disposition to persecute which became rampant in the world after the Great War, the development of systems of oppression, obscurantism and intimidation over large parts of the world's surface, the lapse of Government to a gangster type of discipline exercised his (the mythical Mr. Steele's) mind profoundly. He had no illusions about the efficacy of non-resistance and no belief in Providence . . . he knew how quickly force can lose its head"; and he incidentally asks "whether, although jealousy at the level of spite and murder is wrong, just as is lust at the indiscriminate raping level or appetite at the gluttonous gobbling level, that is any valid reason for setting the critical intelligence aside and saying of God or Lover, 'Though he slay me, yet will I trust in Him.'"

And the way out of the atavistic welters into which we still fall, and the way of progress, is that of enlightenment—of learning, of education, of real knowledge, and rational thought founded upon it—"the hard, laborious, precise and yet noble road . . . paved as it must be with the devotion of myriads of intellectual workers, [which] Man, stripped of all the tawdry pretensions of his past history and all the consolations of spiritualistic imagery, must travel, if he is to achieve effective self-knowledge and gain power for a limitless destiny."

J. REEVES

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD MARCH 16, 1939

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen in the chair.

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

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

New members were admitted to Edinburgh, Birmingham, Manchester, West Ham Branches and the Parent Society.

The question of Summer propaganda was discussed and instructions given to the Secretary.

Correspondence from Smethwick, Birkenhead, Bethnal Green, Gateshead, Chester-le-Street, World Union of

Freethinkers, and the National Peace Council was dealt with.

Progress in Annual Conference arrangements was reported, and Messrs. Clifton and Elstob were appointed to the Agenda Committee.

The date of the next Annual Dinner as January 13, 1940, was confirmed.

Thursday, April 13, was fixed for the next meeting of the Executive and the proceedings then closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,
General Secretary.

THE PRIMITIVE MIND

As a drowning man is said to grasp at a straw so men who lacked the instruments and skill developed in later days snatched at whatever, by any stretch of imagination, could be regarded as a source of help in times of trouble. The attention, the interest and care which now go to acquiring skill in the use of appliance and to the invention of means for better service of ends, were devoted to noting omens, making irrelevant prognostications, performing ritualistic ceremonies and manipulating objects possessed of magical power over natural events. In such an atmosphere primitive religion was born and fostered. Rather, this atmosphere was the religious disposition.

... While it is difficult to avoid the use of the word supernatural, we must avoid the meaning, the word has for us. As long as there was no defined area of the natural, that which is over and beyond the natural can have no significance. The distinction, as anthropological students have pointed out, was between ordinary and extraordinary; between the prosaic, usual run of events and the crucial incident or eruption which determined the direction which the average and expected course of events took. But the two realms were in no way sharply demarcated from each other. There was a no-man's-land, a vague territory in which they overlapped. At any moment the extraordinary might invade the commonplace, and either wreck or clothe it with surprising glory. The use of ordinary things under critical conditions was fraught with inexplicable potentialities of good and evil.

The two dominant conceptions which grew and flourished under such circumstances were those of the holy and the fortunate, with their opposites, the profane and the unlucky. As with the idea of the supernatural, meanings are not to be assigned on the basis of present usage. Everything which was charged with some extraordinary potency for benefit or injury was holy; holiness meant the necessity for being approached with ceremonial scruples. The holy thing, whether place, object, person or ritual appliance, has its sinister label. "To be handled with care," is written upon it. . . . taboos, a whole set of prohibitions and injunctions, gather about it. It is capable of transmitting its mysterious potency to other things. . . . Because of its surcharge of power, ambivalent in quality, the holy has to be approached not only with scruples but in an attitude of subjection. There are rites, purification, humiliation, fasting and prayer which are preconditions of securing its favour.

Professor John Dewar, "The Quest for Certainty."
Alfred J. Ayer, "Language, Truth and Logic."

LINCOLN WAS NOT A CATHOLIC

On April 9, 1865, Lincoln received the information that General Lee had surrendered his army to General Grant. In the spirit of generosity that had characterized his life, Lincoln instructed Grant to allow the rebels to keep their horses and their arms, and to make every provision for the care of all rebel soldiers. He provided food and shelter, not only for the sick and wounded, but for all who were in need.

"The Conquest of Poverty," G. G. McGeer.

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, Sunday, Mr. L. Ebury. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 3.30, Sunday, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Collins and Mrs N. Buxton. Weather permitting.

INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH (The Cricketers' Arms, Inverness Street, Camden Town, N.W.1) : 7.30, Mrs. N. B. Buxton (West London Branch)—"A New Atheist."

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH (Alexandra Hotel, South Side, Clapham Common, S.W.4) : 7.30, Annual General Meeting. Branch members only.

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.0, Professor Susan Stebbing M.A., D.Litt—"Science and 'Hidden Reality.'"

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (The Laurie Arms, Crawford Edgware Road, W.) : 7.30, Mr. E. C. Saphin—"The Craft of Priestcraft."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BIRKENHEAD (Wirral) BRANCH N.S.S. (Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane) : 7.0, Mr. W. Fletcher (Birkenhead)—"Does Man Survive Death?"

BIRMINGHAM BRANCH N.S.S. (Bristol Street Schools) : 7.0, Mr. H. W. Cottingham—"Is Religion Necessary for Morality?"

BLACKBURN BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Assembly Hall, Market Hall, Blackburn) : 7.30, Monday, March 27, Mr. G. Thompson (Liverpool)—A Lecture. Literature for sale.

BLYTH : 7.0, Monday, March 27, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Present Value of Freedom."

EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (28 Bridge Street, Burnley) : 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"The Psychology of War."

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. (Free Gardeners' Hall, Picardy Place, Edinburgh) : 7.0, Dr. Fiddes, Dept. of Forensic Medicine, Edinburgh University—"Science and Crime."

GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (East Hall, McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street, Glasgow) : 7.0, Chapman Cohen—"Free thought and To-day."

LEICESTER SECULAR SOCIETY (Secular Hall, Humberstone Gate) : 6.30, Mr. E. Harry Hassell—"Religion and Morals."

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool, entrance in Christian Street) : 7.0, Speeches by various Ladies.

MANCHESTER BRANCH (Market Street Picture House, Manchester) : 7.0, Mr. Joseph McCabe—"The Popes and the World Crisis." Reserved seats 6d. and 1s.

NORTH SHEILDS (Lord Nelson) : 7.0, Tuesday, March 26, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Mind."

MIDDLESBROUGH (Davison Street) : 7.0, Wednesday, March 29, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"The Common Foes."

STOCKTON (Jubilee Hall) : 7.0, Sunday, March 26, Mr. J. T. Brighton—"Modern Discoveries and Modern Thought."

TEES SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (Jubilee Hall, Leeds Street) : 7.15, A Lecture.

BLACKPOOL.—Apartments 2s. 6d. two persons. B. & B. 3s. each person. Full Board 6s. perday. Recommended by Freethinkers.—AVIS, 62 Woolman Road.

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By the terms of the Trust no Trustee may derive anything in the shape of payment, or emolument for services rendered, and in the event of the Trust being terminated as no longer necessary, the whole of the capital will be handed over to the National Secular Society for general propaganda purposes.

In these circumstances we beg again to bring the existence of the Trust before readers of the *Freethinker*. The Trust may be benefited by direct gifts of money, by the transfer of shares or by legacy.

It should be said that the *Freethinker* is, and always has been, an independent property. It is a private limited company with a purely nominal capital. It is able to avail itself of the income of the Endowment Trust only when an official accountant has certified the amount of the loss during the year, and then only to the extent of the loss. Unfortunately the income of the Trust does not meet the deficit.

There is no need to say very much here concerning the *Freethinker*, or its value to the Freethought Cause.

It holds its own by comparison with any Freethought journal that has ever existed in this country or abroad. It is now in its fifty-eighth year of publication, and stands as high in the estimation of its readers as it has ever done.

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