

THE FREETHINKER

• EDITED *by* CHAPMAN COHEN •
— Founded 1881 —

VOL. I.IX.—No. 21

SUNDAY, MAY 21, 1939

PRICE THREEPENCE

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

	Page
<i>An Enquiring Believer—The Editor</i> - - - -	321
<i>A Vicarious Victory—Mimmermus</i> - - - -	323
<i>The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt—T. F. Palmer</i> - - - -	324
<i>Nature Notes of a Freethinker—Nicholas Merc</i> - - - -	325
<i>Mocking his State and Grinning at his Pomp</i> —T. H. Elstob - - - - -	326
<i>Shakespeare's Religion—J. M. Wheeler</i> - - - -	330
<i>Letters to a Christian Friend—R. H. S. Standfast</i> - - - -	331
<i>Acid Drops, To Correspondents, Sugar Plums, Letters to the Editor, etc.</i>	

Views and Opinions

An Enquiring Believer

In the last two issues of the *Freethinker* I have been dealing with questions raised by correspondents. Going over letters which were put on one side to be dealt with, I find one received very soon after my last visit to Glasgow—I think the letter was received early in April. It came from a university student, and one who was evidently a stranger at our meetings. He was interested enough to send for a supply of our literature, and one may feel assured that if he persists in trying to *understand* the position of the modern Freethinker we may count on another “brand plucked from the burning.” As I have often said, the Christian, however liberal—for a Christian—he may be, and however well-educated he may be, suffers from two great impediments. He doesn't understand the real meaning and significance of Christianity, and he doesn't understand the nature and meaning of Freethought. In this respect the average Freethinker has a great advantage over the average Christian. In the majority of cases, even to-day, Freethinkers have at an earlier stage of their life professed belief in Christianity. And when they are very earnest in their Freethought, the almost safe assumption is that they were also very earnest in their Christianity. Earnestness is not a quality that one acquires through a change of opinion, it is a natural endowment, and one is naturally very earnest or he is not. Anything may call it into expression, but the earnest-natured man, or woman will be earnest with anything that rouses his or her interest. Whether it is backing horses or worshipping Jesus is just a matter of accident.

It follows from what has been said, the ordinary Freethinker criticizes Christianity as something he has known and lived and once believed. The ordinary Christian criticizes Freethought as something he has never lived and has only heard about from other people, usually from those who are interested in placing it before him in a misleading light. The net result may thus be summed up by saying that in

most cases the Christian is engaged in defending something he doesn't understand against an attack from something he doesn't know.

* * *

Religion and the Young

I have space only to take up two statements of my correspondent, but these two cover nearly all the points raised, in various ways, in his letter. He says:—

Surely you will agree that the basic Christian doctrine is love of one's neighbour.

And with regard to the question of Secular Education:—

Surely one does not have to be a Freethinker, or anti-religious, to support this; it is supported by many Christians.

I am quite aware that the policy of Secular Education (I take it that this is what my correspondent has in mind, for I can hardly conceive any sincere Christian desirous of leaving his children alone in the matter of religious instruction) has been adopted by some Christians almost wholly on the ground of their disagreement with the religion that would be taught by the State. Thus, when the Education Bill of 1870 was produced, Nonconformists as a body objected to religion in the schools, because they believed it was the Church of England religion that would be taught. They were not really so much concerned with the injustice of the State teaching religion to children, as they were opposed to the religion of another bunch of Christians being taught. So soon as Nonconformists could endorse a form of religion taught by the State their opposition crumbled away. Even when Secular Education has, within the British Empire, been established by the State as a policy, it has been due to the same conditions. When Secular Education was established in New Zealand it was not due to Christian love of justice. Indeed it owed its establishment largely to the policy being backed by the Catholic Church. Roman Catholics lined up with Freethinkers, for about the only time in its history. As they could not get the Roman Catholic religion taught, they were ready to prevent the religion of another sect being given to children. But ever since a fairly large body of Christians have been doing what they could to upset the arrangement.

There is another illustration of the same point. I know there are a large number of Christian believers who say they believe religion should stand clear of the Secular authorities. But what are the facts? Millions are received by Nonconformists year after year in the shape of exemption from rates and taxes. The help of the State is accepted in the form of the maintenance of Sunday laws, blasphemy laws, and other items of help and patronage. I know that there are many Christians who would say to the State, “stand

back," just as there may be some who would say they would like their children to grow up free from religious pressure. But I also know that to behave in this way is a very un-Christian, even irreligious, form of conduct. If a man really believes that the immortal welfare of his child depends upon having the right kind of religious belief in this world, can one imagine him standing idly by and permitting that child to be, so to speak, damned before his very eyes? And indeed one of the severest of the counts against Christianity is that it often harnesses the better parts of a man's nature to the service of ignorance and superstition. Not infrequently Christians are found nowadays on the side of liberal opinion and of toleration. But in addition to being a religious believer he is also a social animal, and the impulses of man's social sense will not always be denied. How these impulses can be twisted and thwarted in their operation by the power of religious conviction is one of the commonest items of experience.

* * *

Morals and Religion

It is an example of the narcotizing influence of religious propaganda that my correspondent's other point is put as though it may be stated as a basic, an unquestionable, truth. I do not admit for a moment that the Christian religion or any other religion is based upon love of one's neighbour. Morality is a fact, a cardinal fact, long before it is a conscious one. Man no more needs to learn to practise morality than he has to attend school to learn to inflate his lungs. Both are natural facts, the one a physiological fact, the other a social one, but also with a physiological or biological basis. The basis fact of both is forced upon animal life as a whole by the exigencies of existence. Watch an animal mother caring for its young and you have the roots of one line of moral development which reaches a conscious state with the human group. Note the behaviour of those animals that live in groups, and you have the beginnings of another line of development which finds conscious expression in our laws, and consciously respected customs. The lines of behaviour which the animal organism follows unconsciously, are mainly those forced upon it by the necessities of individual existence. The lines of behaviour followed by those animals that live in groups are those enforced by the group life of the herd, and which again find conscious expression in the social life of mankind. Moral laws are as truly the laws of social physiology as physiological laws express the behaviour of the individual organism.

* * *

Man and a Society

Religion also is a social product, although not a necessary one, save in the sense that there is always a necessary set of conditions of which the event is the consequent. There is no good reason for believing that animals have any sense of religion, although many have tried to prove this to be the case. What animals display in the presence of the unusual and the unexpected is fear, and religion does not spring from fear alone. Religion is a product of fear *plus* reflection. "Reflection" is perhaps too sophisticated a word to express my meaning, but it will serve the occasion. But religion belongs to that stage of mental evolution at which man is beginning consciously to feel his way through life, and with a growing consciousness of a "before" and "after" in what is going on around him. Specific religious doctrines and teachings come later.

At this stage the main effect of religion is to distort the moral sense, not to develop it. For the sole concern of primitive religion is to set man right with the crowd of semi-human forces which constitute the raw materials of religion. More even than the animal

group from which mankind has emerged early mankind is a slave of fear. He is that to a very considerable extent to-day. But the main features that strike one about savage life is not its freedom from fear, but a fear of the gods which still survives in a sublimated form with the genuine religionist of to-day.

But if man becomes to a very considerable extent a slave to his religious fears, if he is very early a religious animal, he is also always a social animal. He is a member of a social group, and so is unconsciously subject to the pressure of the "laws" of group life. And here there are two important considerations to be borne in mind. The first is that the observing of certain lines of conduct is essential to the existence of the group. To return to our previous illustration, a society can no more ignore observance of those conditions that are fundamental to the welfare of the group than the individual can ignore observing—consciously or unconsciously—the rules upon which individual and physical health depends. When these are ignored beyond a certain point, the result is deterioration and, ultimately, extinction.

The second consideration to be borne in mind that religious observances have no essentially ethical quality whatever. The sole consideration here is what will please the gods or, at least ward off their anger. The truth of this is shown by the kind of conduct that is of unmistakably religious origin. There are the practices of human sacrifice, of the killing of twins, or of deformed babies, the killing of old people to save them from leading a decrepit existence in the next world, with a host of other similar practices. Any one who consults an authoritative work on anthropology will find many illustrations of this truth, and Christians have an outstanding instance of this in the ceremonial sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

But religion arises in a social group, and from the outset its behests and influences are checked and to some extent controlled by social forces. How many tribes have owned their disappearance to a foolish persistence in anti-social religious customs no one knows, but it is certain that a policy of "appeasement" when applied to the gods must have been at least as costly as it has proven itself to many of the peoples of Europe. When the Church appeased God by forbidding freedom of thought and speech, and enforced its policy by killing off its most daring thinkers, it pursued a course that was only partly checked by the revolt of the social sense of men and women. But always and everywhere it is the pressure of the social or moral sense of mankind that effects an improvement in religious teachings and practice. The dropping of such brutal doctrines as that of eternal hell, the greater mental charity displayed to differences of religious belief are all examples of the same social force. The positions have become completely reversed. Instead of religion laying down authoritative codes of conduct, it is the developing social consciousness of man that lays down the conditions under which religion may continue peacefully to its inevitable end.

CHAPMAN COHEN

QUEEN VICTORIA'S PROCLAMATION TO THE HINDUS

It is our Royal Will and Pleasure that no man shall in any way suffer for his opinions, or be disquieted by reason of his religious faith or observance; and we do strictly charge and enjoin those who may be in authority under us that they abstain from interfering with the religious beliefs of our subjects on pain of our high displeasure. It is our further will that so far as may be our subjects, of whatever race or creed, be freely and impartially admitted to any office, the duties of which they may be qualified by their education, abilities, and integrity duly to discharge.

A Vicarious Victory

Mankind in the mass thinks but slowly.—*Nevinson.*

So long as there are endowed Churches, the Christian Creed will be preached, defended, adapted, and believed by a multitude.—*J. M. Robertson.*

EIGHTY years ago Charles Darwin demonstrated that man has attained his present state through a gradual process of evolution from a lower and less perfect state. The general admission of this truth sweeps away the old Biblical legends which men had been accustomed to consider a sufficient explanation of all things. The legend of a fallen race at once disappears, and all the other strange and monstrous explanations that were necessary to harmonize the ancient theological theory put forth. With it also goes the Bibliolatry which, like so many other idolatries, has served to chain and cramp the human intellect. The Bible of the ancient Hebrews must descend from its lofty pedestal and take its place on the library shelves among the sacred books of other nations, ranging from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead* to the *Book of Mormon*.

Nothing more momentous has taken place since the Renaissance, the re-birth of learning after the darkness of the Middle Ages. And, strangest of all, this intellectual lever, which will, in the long run, overthrow all existing creeds, has come among us so silently that many have scarcely noticed its approach. Opposition there has been, as there is to all new truths, but, compared with the momentous issues at stake, the opposition has been less than might have been expected. Silently and steadily, for eighty years, Darwinism has been relentlessly pushing its way until no one with a reputation to lose now attempts to contravene it. There has been no "bridal birth of thunder peals" while this "great thought has wedded fact." To the unscientific clergy and their ignorant congregations, whose very innocence will not permit them to follow intelligently the course of scientific thought, the new theory must appear like Banquo's awful ghost to the amazed Macbeth. They look up suddenly from their candles, crosses, and prayers, and see the awful shape in front of them. "Adam" and "Eve," the "Lord God" and the "Devil," are driven from the "Garden of Eden," not by an angel with a flaming sword, but by Charles Darwin with a scholar's pen.

Since Darwin's death, the clergy, who formerly denounced him with the whole extensive vocabulary of theological hatred, have, hypocritically, claimed him as one of their own flock. They buried this very black sheep in Westminster Abbey, and calmly pretended that the teachings of Evolution are wholly in accord with those of "Holy Scripture." The legendary stories in "Genesis," are, they contend, entirely scientific, but they omit Darwin's tiresome details. Only two religious bodies have been honest in this matter. Poles asunder in so many respects, the Roman Catholic Church and the Salvation Army have remained faithful to ancient ignorance. On no condition will they part with "Adam" and "Eve," the "apple," and the talking snake. Romanists and Salvationists alike believe that Darwin and his colleagues are suffering the tortures of the damned in a hell of literal fire. These ignorant and uncultured folk no more believe in evolution than they understand the rudiments of science. But those Christian pastors and masters who are trying to effect a compromise between the irreconcilables, religion and science, and, incidentally, to safeguard their sorry profession, talk a very different language. From the Bench of Bishops, resplendent with the needlework of Doodledom, to the glib liars on Pleasant Sunday Afternoon

platforms, they assure their hearers that the great truths of evolution are all in full accord with the Biblical legends, and that science is an assistance to true religion.

All this Christian camouflage would not have succeeded in nullifying the victory of science, were it not that religion is not only a trade, but a very powerful financial vested interest. Intellectually speaking, the victory of science over religion is complete. But there are no fruits of victory, only a deadlock, and a deadlock that lasts. Science is not strong enough to expel superstition. The reason is that science is not organized, and religion is not only organized, but is entrenched behind mountains of money. By virtue of her vast resources, the so-called Church of England holds the balance of power in the national schools and the universities. By virtue of her wealth, her bishops hold the balance of power in the House of Lords. In every parish in the land she has her representatives and her catspaws are in every council. In an emergency the priests of the Established Church can count on the support of the Nonconformist ministers, as may be seen in the Sunday cinema question, and the movement for a brighter Sunday. When these men-of-god agree their unanimity is passing wonderful, and they do agree in resisting the encroachments of science.

What happens is that the representatives of Priestcraft, like Brer Rabbit, "lie low, and say nothing," hoping to keep the money in the family. Let Scientists say what they like, write what they please, the clergy agree that they shall continue to manufacture young Christians in our schools and universities with the same rapidity that a sausage-machine produces sausages. Their wealth enables them to bribe men to prostitute their intellects in their service. If a man will but give lip-service to the popular superstition, he can be assured of an assured income and a comfortable existence. That is the explanation why the "old, old story" is told in the old, bad way, when it should have been discarded by all decently-educated people, with some pretensions to culture.

Observe the evil influence of the vast financial resources of the various Christian Churches. One conception of their duty filled the minds of archbishops, bishops, rectors, vicars and ministers, and that was to maintain the rights and privileges of the huge vested interest which provided them with an easy living. The bad result of this concentrated point of view was that no scientific question, no intellectual matter, ever got fair treatment from the clergy of all the denominations. Hence the sermons and published utterances of the clergy in their misdirected efforts to maintain their privileged position have done more than anything else in the past eighty years to convince plain people that disestablishment and disendowment of the Established Church would be good for Democracy. Time has proved that the Christian clergy are commonly behind and against the best spirit of the age, blindly aggressive against modern culture. It cannot be otherwise. The clergy have formed a bodyguard around the corpse of the Christian Superstition, and are continually singing its praises. But the time is fast coming when the mourners must prepare themselves to attend the obsequies of this two-thousand-years-old superstition with as much decency as they can muster.

MIMNERMUS

When John Morley was spelling God with a small "g," a hallelujah could be raised for Herbert Spencer's spelling unknowable with a big "U."

Moncure Conway

The Rise and Fall of Ancient Egypt

IN the Old Stone Age the Nile Valley was a marsh. So far as is at present known, all that survives of this period are the flint implements and weapons of its prehistoric people. When Egypt emerges into the twilight of history its dark-haired population was plainly distinct from the negroid stocks of the equatorial regions. In the western districts the early Nile dwellers were fair complexioned Libyans, while the eastern were inhabited by desert tribes. Adjoining communities were the Semitic tribes dwelling in Palestine and Arabia. The settlers in Egypt were apparently migrants from the south. The primitive Egyptians themselves regarded Punt as their original seat, a region conjecturally identified with present-day Somaliland.

Civilization existed in Egypt long prior to the foundation of the monarchy, which is provisionally dated at 3,300 B.C. Considerable knowledge has recently been obtained concerning the Pre-Dynastic Tasian and Badarian cultures, and many memorials of these earliest known Nilotic settlers have been recovered from their graves, which are on view in the British Museum. Their pottery and other remains clearly forecast the expert craftsmanship in which their successors excelled to so great a degree.

It has now been established that in the later phases of the Pre-Dynastic Period the Egyptians constructed rude huts of palm ribs and hardened mud, while their chief occupations were agricultural and the chase of animals for food. Their dead were interred in shallow depressions dug in the sand. The corpse was placed in a contracted position and clothed with a skin or mat. The utensils and weapons of the deceased were laid near his remains to accompany and serve him in the ghostly realm. The dried sand of the desert has completely preserved the desiccated remains of these ancient inhabitants, one of which is exhibited in the Museum in Bloomsbury.

Nothing is definitely established of the methods of administration pursued in Pre-Dynastic Times. Obviously, however, centralized authority gradually developed in the various seats of settlement before 3300 B.C., when two independent States—the Northern and the Southern were founded. Their Kings were soon in conflict, and war went on until Menes, the traditional builder of Memphis, assumed sway in a united Egypt. Henceforth, however, throughout the protracted period of undivided rulership the conventional theory of two separate kingdoms was preserved. The administrative system presented a dual appearance and the monarch's double diadem carried the red and white crowns respectively worn by the rulers of the previously divided States.

This opening era of Nilotic civilization—the Archaic Period—came to a close about 2900 B.C. The succeeding stage is termed the Old Kingdom, which expired approximately in 2400 B.C. This last proved a period of remarkable progress, and for a time the monarchy was absolutist. Then decentralization supervened, and the nobles who ruled the various nomes or districts in the Pharaoh's name became insubordinate, and reduced the country to a state of anarchy resembling that of later feudal Europe in its most turbulent periods. Still, the Old Kingdom witnessed the building of the colossal pyramids and tombs of Ghizeh, which are to be numbered among the wonders of the world.

The Middle Kingdom arose upon the ruins of the Old, and during the reigns of the Kings of the Twelfth Dynasty the rebellious barons were ultimately reduced

to complete submission. Senusert III. was the warrior who completed their overthrow. Mr. Alan W. Shorter, the Assistant Keeper of Egyptian and Assyrian Antiquities in the British Museum, in his well illustrated, interesting and instructive volume: *Everyday Life in Ancient Egypt* (Sampson Low), considers the reign of Senusert's successor, Amenemhet III., the Golden Age of the Middle Kingdom. "The most remarkable of this Pharaoh's works," he writes, "was the regulation of Lake Moeris in the Fayum. By means of a barrage he was able to control the outflow of its waters into the Nile, and with a dyke he reclaimed a large tract of land for cultivation. With the death of Amenemhet III. there set in a decline which ended in the usual anarchy, and about 1700 B.C. northern Egypt fell a prey to a great invasion of peoples from the north, the Hyksos or 'Shepherd Kings.'"

For at least a century these intruders held possession of Northern Egypt and intermittently established their rule in the southern territory. But Thebes eventually revolted, and the Hyksos were constrained to depart to Palestine, while in the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty (1580-1321 B.C.), the land of Egypt rose to the zenith of its magnificence.

The oppressive rule of the Hyksos, however, coincided with their introduction of the hitherto unknown horse and chariot into Egypt. These were destined to play a predominant part in coming Nilotic campaigns. With the militant spirit engendered in the Egyptians during their protracted conflict with their oppressors, a passion for conquest pervaded the people. So aggressive did they become that they annexed several adjoining territories. Egypt was extended to the south as far as Nubia, while Palestine and Syria were reduced to dependent provinces which furnished heavy tribute, thus richly replenishing the Egyptian exchequer. Egypt's pre-eminence was now acknowledged by the haughty rulers of Babylon, Assyria and Mitanni.

The royal capital of Thebes now became the leading city of antiquity and the temples of its great divinity, Amon-Ré assumed colossal proportions. Under Amenhotep III., Egypt's good graces were anxiously solicited by the Kings of foreign States. This famous Pharaoh apparently placed policy above religion, but his youthful son and successor, Amenhotep IV., proved an earnest religious revolutionary determined to restore the cult of the solar deity of earlier times, whose adoration and worship had been subordinated by the ceremonial and divine honours addressed to the intruding god Amon. The King discarded his original name and adopted that of Akenhaten and erected a new capital at what is now Tel-el-Amarna, the excavations of whose ruins have revealed so much of the life of the past.

Unfortunately, while the reformer and his adherents were engaged in religious meditation and prayer, and with their monotheistic teaching anticipating the Hebrew prophets by more than 800 years, the Asiatic provinces needed serious attention as their retention was threatened by hostile influences. As Professor Breasted observes: "Thus, while Egypt was in sore need of a vigorous and skilled administrator, the young King was in close counsel with a priest and two perhaps gifted women who, however able, were not of the fibre to show the new Pharaoh what the empire really demanded. Instead of gathering the army so sadly needed at Naharin . . . Amenhotep IV. immersed himself heart and soul in the thought of the time, and the philosophizing theology of the priests was of more importance to him than all the provinces of Asia."

Akenhaten's successors were of little account until Horemheb's reforms restored Egyptian prestige. In

the later Nineteenth Dynasty, Seti I. and Rameses II. were outstanding personalities and successful rulers, but the reign of the latter's son witnessed the commencement of decline. Neighbouring communities assailed Egypt, but although the invaders were trounced by Rameses III., both on land and sea, in the first naval battle on record, these victories proved ephemeral.

Sagacious Kings and capable administrators repeatedly repaired the mistakes of their predecessors. Yet, while a moderate equilibrium was maintained by the secular authorities, the sacerdotal caste, especially the arrogant priesthood of the restored Amon in the capital city of Thebes had been steadily strengthening its organization and power. A very generous proportion of the tribute paid by dependent peoples which during centuries had flown into Egyptian coffers had been assigned to the priesthood, which was now the most opulent and influential order in the State. The High Priest of Amon was virtually a rival ruler and, as Rameses III. was succeeded by a series of incompetent Kings, Herhor, the High Priest, mounted the throne made vacant by the death of Rameses IX. An independent sovereign had already usurped the Delta; Egypt's Asiatic possessions had practically vanished, and Nubia alone remained.

Trouble and discontent reigned supreme for years, and the once proud and potent Empire was successively overrun by Libyan, Nubian and Assyrian assailants. The relentless Assyrian armies of Ashurbanipal captured and ravaged the majestic City of Thebes of the Hundred Gates. The overthrow of Egypt seemed complete, when the conflict between Assyria and Babylon necessitated the recall of the former's military forces to Mesopotamia. This respite enabled a native ruler of Sais to found the Twenty-Sixth Dynasty in 663 B.C.

This period of Nilotic history has been termed the *Renaissance* during which Egypt turned her face towards the past. The achievements of the Old Kingdom were idealized, and ancient customs and antique art were revered, and to some extent restored. But like the pre-Raphaelite painters and poets of nineteenth century England, the Egyptians were living in a changed world. Other races had arisen, and the active and versatile Greeks were establishing their colonies along the coasts, while their argosies sailed throughout the Mediterranean Sea. Greek colonists settled in several parts of Egypt, most notably at Naukratis and Daphne. Greeks, Carians, Syrians and others served as soldiers in the Egyptian armies, and the rulers of the reigning Dynasty entered into foreign treaties and alliances. This abandonment of long-sustained exclusiveness led to a period of pronounced prosperity, and the recovery of the lost Asiatic provinces was attempted. This adventure, however, was ill-starred, and when at the Battle of Carchemish, in 605 B.C., the Babylonian monarch Nebuchadnezzar utterly routed Necho the Egyptian Commander, Syria and Palestine were permanently released from Nilotic control.

Thus, Egypt's recovery proved ephemeral. Persia had risen to a predominant position, and Cyrus was effacing ancient and effete monarchies in rapid succession. In 525 B.C., the successor of Cyrus, Cambyses made the Land of the Nile a province of the Persian Empire. Egypt continued under Persian dominion until the campaigns of the Macedonian monarch, Alexander the Great, and it remained under Greek tutelage until its annexation by the Roman State. Its religion was made Christian only to be superseded by the adoption of Mohammed's cult, and the restoration of its lost culture and real independence seems sadly to seek.

T. F. PALMER

Nature Notes of a Freethinker

In the old days, when buses were drawn by horses, the proceeds from fares were shared between the driver and the conductor. On the basis of "one for you, and two for me," the driver divided up the takings. The tame robin who has now been mated for some weeks, appeared on the breakfast table one morning, and took a piece of fat bacon and ate it. He then took another piece and flew away and gave it to his mate. On his return he took another piece for himself and disappeared. I have been told, on reliable authority in the house, that this performance has been repeated several times. A memorable incident occurred recently. The cock blue-tit, whose plumage is now a glorious yellow, opal and blue, flew on the grass for a small piece of nut. He was joined by his mate at once. They both surveyed the nut, and then, he spread out his wings and shimmered in the sunlight. Then there was a chitter-chatter between the two, and he took the nut and flew. It might have been his turn on the bird process of "one for you and one for me"—and perhaps the talk between them was some mental calculation as to who had had the last one. The mating and building activities of all our little friends—for many of them follow us about, wake us up in the morning by tapping on the window with their beaks, or calling—the latter is the chaffinch's method—are all new movements in the spring season. The various birds develop different habits.

The female chaffinch gets more confiding—she lessens the already small distance between us. Her lord and master, now arrayed in colours from some paradise, sidles close up to my feet and waits there whilst nibbling a nut. The male blue tit, hovers, and flutters near to my face; the female blackbird hops towards me, and as we have no more ferocious animals about than a tortoise who eats buttercups and lettuce, their trust is not likely to be broken. The Great-Tit, with his gorgeous spring plumage, and glittering eyes, has now re-commenced to take food from my hand. And he also works on the "one for me, and one for you" principle with his mate. It is all very interesting, but only by comparing notes with others, and attending to the school of observation can I hope to make an intelligible interpretation of it.

Under the window of my book-room, a pair of blackbirds have built their nest—with good taste. It is bound among the close stems of a goldfinch rose tree, and, without "by your leave," one of the pair had thought fit to be artistic. There, dangling from the front of the nest was a root, leaves, and flowers of a wild violet.

NICHOLAS MERE

A MIRACLE

She was an old Irishwoman on her way back to Dublin from the North. The customs man fished out a bottle from its temporary sanctuary in a voluminous night-dress.

"And what's this?" asked the customs man.

"Shure, an' it's holy water," said the old lady, clutching for it. The customs man had his suspicions; pulled out the cork; sniffed.

"This is whiskey," he said, sternly.

Up went the old lady's hands in amazement.

"Glory be! A miracle!"

Mocking his State and Grinning at his Pomp

THE Apple Tree has indeed been sadly afflicted by God's insects. It would be a mistake for an Apple Grower, however, to think that this was in any way exceptional. The Melon would illustrate the same point just as well. This point is that there is just as much evidence that man is designed for the insects as that the insects are designed for man. God's work, as illustrated by the hosts of small insects, is purposeless, for what looks like a purpose when one looks at what God created on Monday is negated by what he (or it) did on Tuesday. It is certainly impossible to deduce from the lives and habits of insects that the purpose of their existence is in some way bound up with the pleasure of man, the only creature with a soul.

The Apple Tree suffers from a universal ailment. "There's never a leaf nor a blade too mean to be a happy creature's palace." Dr. Johnson is credited with saying that God may have made a better berry than the strawberry but, if he did, he did not know of it. How good of God then to make the strawberry! One happy creature (Dr. Johnson) finds his palace decked by the strawberry. Excellent! but *was God thinking of Johnson* when he made the strawberry Root Louse to incommode the growth of the strawberry plant and minimise at the same time the comforts of Dr. Johnson's happy palace? Is it absurd to believe that God made the strawberry for the benefit of the strawberry root louse? If Man, the only creature with a soul, is marked out for preferential treatment, why, at some portion of the Earth's history, did God say Let there be a Strawberry Root Louse and Lo! the Strawberry Root Louse was?

Man eats vegetables as well as fruits. God is not specially rough on fruit, although those who live by the cultivation of fruit are apt to think so. They "talk through their pockets." There is an ingenious little creature called the Psila Rosae that the allotment holders of Lancashire and Cheshire found to be death to carrots. There is the Pea Weevil, so destructive that ruination has come to American farmers through the depredations of this little creature alone. There are the Bean Weevils. And there are the special tiny tots let loose on grain. All grain crops have their own special insects. The rice weevil is perhaps the most destructive insect in the whole world. Every cultivated crop has its own special mite and, in some cases, hundreds of insect enemies. There are in fact one or more species adapted to take as food every kind of organic material in the world, plant or animal, living or dead, dry or decomposing, raw or manufactured, sweet or sour, hard or soft. God has seen to it that their digestive systems are sound enough to eat almost anything. They live, for instance on vinegar, black-pepper, skeletons and mummies, church-timbers and weak insect-powder. They breed and live in alkaline lakes such as the Great Salt Lake, which is of a degree of alkalinity fatal to the existence of any other form of life. They can breed and live in salt mines, such as in Bohemia; and in petroleum. The petroleum-fly can breed and live in such a medium—on the insects not so fortunate—and yet petroleum is used all over the world to destroy insects. Many a person almost dependent on a chemist's prescription must wish that God had been as ingenious in his devices when thinking about man's stomach as he has been when turning out his midges and weevils.

It is easy to see that the comprehensive appetite of the insects is as harmful to man in indirect ways, as it is in plain cases like the rosy and woolly apple aphid. "You take my life when you do take the means whereby I live."

Man eats beef for instance. But God makes the Ox Warble Fly to go a disgusting process through the body of the ox, and thus damaging the value of the beast both for its hide and flesh. This form of damage is colossal in the trouble it causes man; and such instances can be multiplied by thousands.

Man has other kinds of appetite. He takes a delight, an aesthetic delight, for instance, in the butterfly. How good of God to make the butterfly! If God had turned the butterfly out of his workshop as he does many other creatures, it would have been one of the items to his credit—judging his act, of course, from the prejudiced and egotistical point of view of Man himself. But God, in his wisdom, has made the butterfly in a more roundabout way—the way of *metamorphosis*. There is the egg, the larva, the pupa, the Camberwell Beauty. The Camberwell Beauty is good to gaze upon; the egg and the pupa refrain from hurting man—they simply lie low and do nuffin'. But the larva—Oh, the larva! The larva is a gluttonous creature with voracious appetite, and with special jaws and means of locomotion to help it satisfy that appetite. This equipment is gratifying, no doubt, to the larva, and may be gratifying to its Maker—but it is heart-breaking to the allotment-holder. Omnipotence has proved his quality in many instances by dispensing with metamorphosis, when so disposed. But it evidently cannot resist giving the Paragon of Animals (self-styled), lesson after lesson in humility.

Besides, God has found another purpose for the butterfly apart from the delight it gives to Man. There are other little creatures which God delights in, and the butterfly is of use to them. For it is necessary (according to the Psalms and the Prayer Book) that all creeping and flying things should have occasion to praise the Lord. When W. H. Ashmead, in 1902, studied the varieties of the parasites of the Lepidoptera, he gave the number of them as *over a million*. And it has been known for nearly three thousand adult, active parasites to emerge from a single caterpillar, when the original eggs laid by the adult parasite in the caterpillar were probably not more than a dozen at the most. The parasite is a second thought in God's plan of creation, the secondary parasite his third thought, the tertiary parasite his fourth thought, the quaternary parasite his fifth thought, and so on. Knowledge grows from more to more. It looks as if the parasites were God's pets.

There is another device that God has perfected in order to humble Man's Pride. The Insect is often a Disease Carrier. It is God's pleasure that the humble insect should be the chosen means of boring through Man's castle wall; and so, Farewell, Paragon! The following are some of the blessings of God which are *insect-borne*: Yellow Fever, Malaria, Elephantiasis, Sleeping Sickness, Typhus, Bubonic Plague, Typhoid. Can anyone doubt after this that although Man has a Soul to be Saved, it is the Insect who is the Lord of Creation? If one rejects this conclusion and prefers to think that as long as God is in his Heaven all is right with the World, then it is logical to leave God's insects alone. To do otherwise is to circumvent God, and that should be left to the politicians. All the scientists in our universities engaged in the grim work of Insect Control should be sacked as impious. The true philosophy becomes that of Friar Lawrence:—

For nought so vile that on the earth doth live
But to the earth some special good doth give.

H. G. Wells and Julian Huxley may consider insects as, for the most part, nuisances, and "a distressful aspect of creation," but there can be little doubt that, if they had enjoyed the special education that Friar Lawrence experienced, they would have agreed with the Man of Prayer.

T. H. ELSTON

Acid Drops

It is evident that the old wheeze, "lies, damned lies, and statistics" needs revising. In the House of Commons on May 8, Lloyd George, who was behind the scenes in the 1914 war, said:—

Three years before the war in 1914 we had every detail worked out. We had discussed with France and through France with Russia, the part we had to play. Not only that, but an expeditionary force was ready.

That part of the public which has not soddened its brains with the yellow press, will remember that the cry against the Government was we were not ready, and Germany had taken advantage of our unpreparedness. Mr. Lloyd George now says that this was all a lie. We may also recall the propaganda of fear by the Government which tried to reconcile the public to Munich by again picturing Britain as quite unprepared to resist a Nazi attack, when it was fairly plain that Germany dare not attack the then combination against her. So we think we had better alter the old adage, or at least supply another—"There are liars, damned liars, and politicians."

The following is from *The Voice of Spain*—issued by United Editorial Limited, the body responsible for the bulky volumes which gave such useful volumes of documents and records of the Spanish War:—

On April 10 an important chemist's shop in Granada had the following notice in its window: "*Do not buy French products.*" Below it was a map of the Mediterranean, with the words: "Where a conflict might start," and the comment that the Mediterranean is a "Wasps' Nest." Then followed the following:—

"(1) Tangier, which should belong to Spain, is International.

"(2) Gibraltar, which should belong to Spain, belongs to England.

"(3) Corsica, which should belong to Italy, belongs to France.

"(4) Tunisia, which should belong to Italy, belongs to France.

"(5) Malta, which should belong to Italy, belongs to England.

"(6) Albania, which England wants to make a base against Italy. (Too late!)

"(7) Syria, which belongs to France, should belong to the Turks.

"(8) Palestine, where the English want to instal the Jews.

"(9) Suez, which should be International, is Anglo-French."

It is reported that Franco is seeking a substantial loan from England, and that it may be arranged. We see no great objection to this. If Franco is to convert Spain into a bulwark of German and Italian interests in the event of war against this country, he must have the money from somewhere for armaments and other war-like preparations, and neither Italy nor Germany is able to supply the funds.

Many hard things have been said about the poor mentality of present-day theologians, but it must be admitted that the Church has some very daring intellects in its service. In the *Church Quarterly Review*, the Bishop of Gloucester gives his opinion that the story of Adam and Eve is just an allegory. If one thinks of the calm strength of the intellect of a man who in 1939—only eighty years after the *Origin of Species*—comes to so breathtaking a conclusion, one feels that the glory of the human mind has not yet departed. The Bishop of Gloucester is a real thinker—a real Christian-thinker, that is. Other educated men might take it as an insult to their intelligence to be under suspicion of ever believing in the story of Adam and Eve. Some of these educated men, of course, go too far. Some do not believe in even the historical truth of a Jewish girl who, two-thousand years ago, brought a baby into the world without the co-operation of a man. But in some cases, intelligence is apt to run wild.

It does really look almost impossible for the parsons whom the daring Bishop of Gloucester is trying to enlighten to be so ill-informed on matters concerning the origin and meaning of religious ideas as they appear to be. But the semi-miracle is there, and a part explanation may be found in the circumstance that they have all passed through some theological training by which those who are weak-minded by nature are made incurably so by a course of education.

But, then, most of our schools, from the elementary stage to the university, seem to aim at two things (1) to open to the student vistas of unlimited knowledge, and (2) to hide from the student everything that it is not good for him to know. The result of the best educational years of a man's life being spent in this way is to (a) prevent his understanding the significance of much that he has learned, (b) to impress upon others the conviction that what he has not learned cannot be of any use to anybody. We fancy that is the chief significance and value of the letters that follow a man's name when he has finished his "education." They offer the best guarantee that he will never let go of anything stupid he has digested, and may be trusted to do all that lies within his power to see that, so far as he can help it, none who comes under the control of his influence shall ever discover a "dangerous" truth about anything. Of course some do develop on other lines, and then they become heretics, or Atheists, or revolutionists, or reformers, or "Bolshevists" or other reprehensible persons.

Germany has aimed another blow at the Church by the decree that the Roman Church will no longer be subsidized by the State. Now we are not among those who think that such an institution as the Roman Church is wholly a matter of cash. But there is no question that the imposing buildings of the Church, the elaborate ceremonies, the costly processions, and so forth, have tremendous effect in imposing Roman Catholic beliefs on the people.

Superstition does not rest upon wealth, nor can it be perpetuated wholly by it. But we should never have heard so many lies as we have heard as to art and music owing so much to the Church, had the latter not been wealthy enough to purchase the skill of painters and musicians, often themselves non-religious, and to use their genius further to impose its will on masses of people. The wealth of the Church—of any Church—is a method of imposing upon credulity and utilizing self-interest. And it is quite certain that the Roman Church, or a Protestant Church in any country nowadays, is going to suffer severely if it finds its revenues cut off.

An earthquake in Concepcion, Chili, destroyed several churches and wiped out four dioceses. The cathedral was so damaged by the earthquake that it had to be blown up by the authorities. A miracle might have upheld it. But it would have looked very strange if God Almighty having expressed his will by the general destruction had performed a miracle in saving the cathedral. We are not finding fault with the Lord. We are merely suggesting that when he scatters earthquakes about he obviously doesn't care a damn whether it is a cathedral or a gambling hell that he blasts out of existence.

The Rev. W. C. McDoual, speaking at a meeting of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, says that

In China men are looking on the Christian religion with new eyes. They want to follow the path where Christians led. They wanted to see Jesus.

The first item sounds rather sarcastic. It is because men are looking upon Christianity with "new eyes" that the Christian Church is in such obvious decay. Number two is also sarcastic. The desire to follow the path that Christians have followed may refer only to the desire for as liberal a supply of poison gas, bombs and big guns as the Christians of the world possess. The third is rather puzzling. What do the Chinese want to see Jesus about? If Christianity be true, then the wholesale slaughter of so

many people in China, with implements largely supplied by the Christian nations of the world, may give them the desired opportunity. It looks as though the Chinaman who gave Mr. McDoual the information he passed on to the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel was "pulling his leg."

In whatever else the Roman Church may have changed, on the question of Devils and Angels, it is as it always was. Here is an official pronouncement from the *Universe* :—

A.G.—It is absolutely certain that the devil and his angels are eternally lost. It is also absolutely certain that some humans will go to hell. This is clearly taught by Our Lord in the Gospels. But there is no certitude as to any particular human being, except Judas. Theologians argue that Our Lord's words, "It would have been better for that man if he had not been born," imply that he is eternally lost.

Mark Twain once suggested that the reason why all real Christians went to heaven was that the other place wouldn't tolerate them.

The Rev. C. M. Barker, of Bramfield Vicarage, Suffolk, is a remarkable survival of primitivism. Apparently, he looks upon the village as a Kaffir Kraal with himself as the Induna (a chief). The people's warden, defending himself against the vicar's charge of slander and libel, said Mr. Barker

upset nearly everyone. He turned out the grown-up members of the choir. Mr. Barker had said that he was the head man in the village, and that he wanted to be top dog in the school as well. (Laughter.)

Mr. Barker had a school of his own for a short time. The boys wore special caps. The whole thing was so irregular that the education authorities put a stop to it.

"Head man" Barker lost his case before an indaba (council) held under Inkoos (Big chief) Justice Charles in the grand Strand kraal known as the Law Courts among our tribe.

From Madrid the British United Press reports that the Spanish University Syndicate has burned the works of Marx, Rousseau, Voltaire, Gorki and Remarque (author of *All Quiet on the Western Front*). So falls the hand of that Christian gentleman, Franco, guided by the Roman Catholic Church, his master. *Semper idem*. The leopard shall change his spots ere Catholicism shall know liberty and learning.

Talking with a barrister friend, an *Evening News* gossip-writer found him much concerned over the Criminal Justice Bill, which has passed committee stage, and was to be taken up after the Budget. Clause 18 places certain offenders under probation, and the barrister said that "he and others fear the authorities are set upon barring all interference by religious bodies in such cases." The Home Secretary had assured Sir Archibald Southby that "So far as we can we encourage probation officers of a particular denomination to deal with prisoners of that denomination." The gossip adds: "But religious bodies feel that it is not a matter that should be left to the good will of officials, and so an amendment to provide what the Home Secretary's assurance already gives is to be tabled a second time." We think it the *duty* of the Home Secretary to make a strong defence for that part of the Bill as it stands. We are not denying that there are many worthy men among the clergy of the different denominations, but it must be remembered that the main business of ministers of religion is soul-snatching, and religious prejudice will operate here as elsewhere. The best men will be laymen selected for their fitness for the work.

It must have been very soothing for Albanians, who are Mussulmans, to read Mussolini's proclamation as their Christian God-appointed redeemer. They were told by the mighty warrior whose "conquests" are similar to the cracking of a nut by the Nasmyth hammer, that :—

It is not God's will that the Albanian people continue to live in misery and shame. Italian soldiers arrived to-day and will assure the independence of your nation and protect your lives, your homes and your land.

Albanians! Welcome each Italian soldier as a guest and liberator. Welcome him with the same brotherly spirit as he approaches you. Truth will at last make headway. The hearts of all Italians are thinking of you.

H'm, yes; but "Brother, do please withdraw your bayonet from my entrails."

Verily, of the making of gods there is no end. Hitler could hardly excel the god-like pronouncement of his rival. Mark this :—

Zog's Government has finished plundering and murdering people. The Fascist soldiers of the powerful and glorious Italian army have arrived to help you. The great Duce, who is a friend of you and all peoples that suffer, has heeded your call.

Yet the "great Duce" must have a care if we are to credit what transpired in a meeting with Hitler. "Adolph: I have had a remarkable dream," said the would-be Caesar: "I stood on African soil, when suddenly God appeared to me, saying 'Benito; look around. All this land, with its wealth of gold, of diamonds, and riches manifold shall be yours.'" Whereat Hitler interposed: "I never said any such thing!"

On his return from an exhibition to British Guiana and Venezuela, Dr. Paul A. Zahl, of Union College, Schenectady, N.Y., reported

that some villages had never before been visited by a white man, and it was in these villages that happiness reigned.

Natives who lived near white settlements invariably showed marked development of jealousy, treachery and anger, the explorer found.

Dr. Zahl should have kept the fact quiet; now there'll be a stir amongst Foreign Missions to teach these poor heathen Christianity.

Major Yeats-Brown, who claims to be "psychic"—a term that covers more elaborate ignorance and deliberate imposture than any other with which we are acquainted—says, in his *European Jungle*, that when he met Hitler and shook hands with him, "I felt at once that I liked and trusted him," but he adds, "Recent events have proved me wrong." So much for his "psychic" powers. Could he have made a worse blunder if he had not been "psychic"? It is time that this completely dishonest and ignorant phrase was dropped by all men and women who value honesty of intercourse.

Fifty Years Ago

RELIGION is largely made up of ritual. What calls out the devotion of the pious Catholic is not the doctrines of the Incarnation, the Atonement, or the Infallibility of the Pope. These command only assent. Devotion is fixed on the accustomed service of the church, the dimly lighted shrines, the solemn organ tones, the wafts of incense, the hymns of the surpliced choir, the fine building and the gorgeous vestments of the priests, separating them from beings of common clay. Such features lift worship out of the rut of every-day common-place. Ritualism makes religion at once a spectacle and an entertainment. It is always found that as dogmas decline ritual advances; with the demand for less theology there has gone on in all the churches a demand for more attractive services. The more rottenness within, the more paint is needed on the outside.

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTÉ

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

C. M. & H. UNDERWOOD.—Thanks for cuttings. Those who help in this way give us real and greatly appreciated assistance. It not alone saves us much valuable time, but it also brings to our notice that which we might otherwise miss. But, please, always give date and name of paper from which the cutting is taken.

M. WHITEFIELD.—Congratulations on the year's sale of literature. Your Branch, we expect, will have "topped the bill" this year for sales of literature.

J. H. MITCHELL.—Thanks for address of a likely new reader; paper sent as requested.

G. PRESCOTT.—We are quite familiar with your name. Copy sent as part of plan of distribution, and such mistakes are bound to occur. We have frequently had articles in this journal dealing with the subject matter of the books you name, but there is always scope for more on the same topic.

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.

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" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—

One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

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

Sugar Plums

A final word on the arrangements for the Annual Conference of the N.S.S. at Bradford. Business meetings will be held in the Mechanics' Institute, Town Hall Square, on Whit-Sunday, commencing at 10.30 a.m. and 2.30 p.m. Only Delegates and Members of the N.S.S. are entitled to attend; credentials or cards of membership will have to be shown. A Public Demonstration will be held in the large lecture hall at 7 p.m. A reception of Members and Delegates will be held in the Great Northern Victoria Hotel, adjoining Exchange Station, on Saturday, May 27, at 7 p.m., and a Conference Luncheon will be held there at 1 p.m., on Whit-Sunday, price 3s. 6d. The Mechanics' Institute and Victoria Hall are separated by about 300 yards. An outing by coach has been arranged for the Monday to Malham Cove, and those wishing to take part should notify the local Secretary, Mr. H. Y. Rogers, Spicer Street, Little Horton, Bradford, without delay. Tickets, 8s. 6d. each, cover fare, lunch, and tea. Bradford can be easily reached from a wide area, and the Conference is sure to attract a good muster of saints.

German propaganda—and it should be borne in mind that ninety per cent of Fascist propaganda in this country is German—appears to have enlisted ex-Dean Inge in its service. We do not mean that Dr. Inge is consciously a

tool of Germany, but the influence to which he has been subjected, together with certain ingrained prejudices of his own, have led him to say things that he may quite probably be presently ashamed of having said. In a recent article—syndicated—he said that:—

The danger of war comes not from Germany or Italy but from ourselves. Our Reds are furious because the World Revolution has been stopped by the despised bourgeoisie. . . . They are supported by the Jews (I am sure we cannot blame them!) who are using their not inconsiderable influence in the Press and in Parliament to embroil us with Germany.

"Reds" is, of course, an equivalent for all those to whom crusted toryism, unscrupulous financial interests, and retrogressive religionists object.

Questioned by a *News-Chronicle* representative as to what he meant the ex-Dean replied, "You are asking me to name names, and I am not going to":—

What I will say, however, is this: that I have been told by one Member of Parliament that great Jewish pressure is being put on M.P.'s to oppose any policy towards conciliation of Germany.

With regard to the Press, I will say that I have no knowledge of any direct Jewish influence being exerted upon editors and editorial departments. But—I have been informed by one journalist that, when his newspaper was adopting a pro-German policy, or at least one sympathetic to Germany and possibly productive of peace between Britain and Germany, the Jewish business firms which advertised in his paper stated that, unless the policy were dropped, they would cancel their advertising contracts—and the policy was dropped.

Further than that I will not go. But I should like to make two things very clear.

Primarily, my deep sympathy with the Jews. I have no words to express my pity for them nor my horror at their treatment. I said in my article we would not blame them for their action; and I don't—but that does not say that they are not pursuing the policy of exerting pressure on both Parliament and the Press.

Secondly, I want to make it quite clear that when I said that the danger of war came from us and not from the dictatorships I did not wish to convey that I approved of Hitler. No one, I think, hates Hitler more than I do.

In the face of this statement there seems only one course consistent with self-respect for Dr. Inge to pursue. This is openly to confess that in bringing this charge—an obvious cover for Mussolini and Hitler—he was over-influenced by his own political and religious prejudices, and grossly deceived by this Member of Parliament and solitary journalist. The French Government is taking in hand the bribery that Germany has been practising with regard to the French Press and French officials. Of course, no one in Britain would dare to suggest that any of our own public officials, including Members of Parliament, or journalists, are subject to financial or other forms of bribery. We have often made confession to the world that in English journalism and in English public life bribery of a sort is absolutely unknown. All the more reason why Dr. Inge should let the world know on whose authority he has brought so serious—in present circumstances—so criminal a charge against a whole people and against the press. We do not question that some Member of Parliament and some journalist did say what Dr. Inge reports. But to offer an implied defence of the two great European criminals—Mussolini and Hitler—on such anonymous authority is to strain credulity over much.

We have a well-written and forcible letter on "The Bible in the Schools," in the *Keighley News*, from the pen of H. Stewart Wishart. Mr. Wishart retains his life-long interest in Freethought unimpaired and undiminished. More power to his elbow.

Mr. G. Whitehead will be in Edinburgh for a week commencing to-day (May 21), and will lecture each evening. Details will be found in the Lecture Notice column, and the local N.S.S. Branch is expecting a series of interesting meetings. Freethinkers within range are asked to give the proceedings the advantage of their support.

Another item from a newcomer to the *Freethinker* (Walthamstow) :—

I started reading the *Freethinker* last year, and was so pleased that I bought the complete issues for 1935-6-7. Unlike other publications the matter did not strike me as being out of date; in fact the articles are so broad in character they might be read with advantage twenty years hence. I find the simple and direct style used most instructive; it enables me to better express myself on all subjects. I have found the *Freethinker* to be a post-school text-book.

We print this letter with a purpose. There are many thousands of individuals in this country who would be glad to make the acquaintance of the *Freethinker*. We are asking for the co-operation of our interested readers to get them. Apart from other considerations, the *Freethinker* has been issued for fifty-eight years with every year recording a financial loss. It is really time this state of affairs ended.

Shakespeare's Religion

(Concluded on page 309)

It is hard indeed to say whether he had any religious belief or no. The religious phrases which are thinly scattered over his works are little more than expressions of a distant and imaginative reverence. But on the deeper grounds of religious faith his silence is significant. He is silent, and the doubt of Hamlet deepens his silence about the after-world. "To die," it may be, was to him as it was to Claudio, "to go we know not whither." Often as his questionings turn to the riddle of life and death he leaves it a riddle to the last without heeding the common theological solutions around him.—J. R. GREEN, *Short History of the English People*, bk. vi., chap 7.

WHILE signs of "a distant and imaginative reverence" may certainly be descried in Shakespeare, a constant and palpable irreverence is far more glaring. A pious person could never have permitted himself to write down the profanity in which he indulges. He continually takes the name of God in vain. Even when our copies read "heaven" he often wrote "God," and "God" or "gods," theism or polytheism, seem quite indifferent to him. The most sacred term of religion is mainly used as a name to swear by. When swearing is meant seriously, the *Freethinker* breaks out in such an exclamation as that of Brutus, "Swear priests and cowards and men cautelous." The vanity of vows opposed to the surges of passion is a frequent theme.

He used the Bible, as he used everything, as his master.¹² Sir John Falstaff revels in Bible allusion. "In the state of innocence Adam fell, and what should poor Jack Falstaff do in a state of villainy?"—a saying possibly known to the French poet Piron, who excused himself for being drunk on Good Friday since on that day even Deity succumbed. "If to be fat is to be hated, then Pharaoh's lean kine are to be loved." Bardolph's face reminds him of hell-fire and Dives that lived in purple. His face is Lucifer's privy-kitchen, where he doth nothing but roast malt worms. Such a conception of the Devil could but excite the ridicule of a man who had read Marlowe's *Faustus*. Then how Sir John ridicules hell-fire: "I think the Devil will not have me damned lest the oil that is in me should set hell on fire."¹³ So, when he dies, trusty Bardolph cries, "Would I were with him, wheresome'er he is, either in heaven or in

¹² Dr. Furnivall notes that in *Henry VIII*. Fletcher, a bishop's son, "naturally made use of scriptural expressions in his part of Henry VIII. far more often than his master, Shakespeare, did in his part."

¹³ Mrs. Page tells Mrs. Ford to dispense with such a trifle as going "to hell for an eternal moment or so."

hell"; and Mistress Quickly replies, "Nay, sure he's not in hell! he's in Arthur's bosom, if ever man went to Arthur's bosom," substituting with fine intuition the mythical English hero for the mythical Jewish one. Surely, could Shakespeare have read Bishop Wordsworth's attempt to make him a bibliolater, he would have said, "God made incision in thee."

His audacious genius never hesitates to joke at Scripture, or to treat with irreverence the most revered features of Christian belief. How admirably does the Clown in *Measure for Measure* (IV., 2) bowl over St. Paul's nonsense in Iph. v., 23, about the subordination of women:

Provost. Come hither, sirrah. Can you cut off a man's head.

Pompey. If the man be a bachelor, sir, I can; but if he be a married man, he is his wife's head, and I can never cut off a woman's head.

He warns us that :—

In religion
What damned error, but some sober brow
Will bless it and approve it with a text.

Richard II. (IV. 5) sets the word against the word as thus :—

Come little ones; and then again,
It is as hard to come as for a camel
To thread the postern of a needle's eye.

The King compares himself to Jesus, and exalts his own misery above that of his Saviour. He has "Three Judases, each one thrice worse than Judas." So Judas did to Jesus—"he, in twelve, found truth in all but one; I, in twelve thousand, none."

What religious Christian could have indulged in the flippancy of making even crook-backed Richard say, "For you shall sup with Jesus Christ to-night" (*Henry VI.*, v. 1). In the same play (I., 3) the Duchess of Gloster says—

Could I come near your beauty with my nails,
I'd set my ten commandments in thy face.

Akin to this irreverence may be classed Rosalind's saying of Orlando, "His kissing is as full of sanctity as the touch of holy bread." Celia rejoins, "A nun of winter's sisterhood kisses not more religiously. The very ice of chastity in his kisses" (*As You Like It*, III., 4).

Dr. Bucknill, in his *Mad Folk of Shakespeare* (p. 323), gives his opinion that the scene between Malvolio and the Clown in *Twelfth Night* represents a caricature of the idea that madness is occasioned by demoniacal possession, and is curable by priestly exorcism. To satirize the first part of this idea is to satirize the New Testament; and to laugh at the second is to laugh at the Church of England, which endorses the belief in its 72nd Canon, providing that no minister shall cast out devils without the licence of the bishop of the diocese.

In *Twelfth Night*, when Olivia says of her brother,

I know his soul is in heaven, fool,

Straight comes the rude answer,

The more fool you, madonna, to mourn for your brother's soul being in heaven.

In the second part of *King Henry VI.*, Act II., sc. I., Shakespeare introduces a miracle scene, of one said to have been born blind and to have received his sight. The only object of the scene, which cannot fail to remind one of the Gospel story, is to show how cunning is ready to play upon credulity.

Shakespeare not only ridicules miracles—he explains them, and that by the mouth of a cardinal (*King John*, III., 4) :—

No natural exhalation in the sky,
No scope of Nature, no distempered day,
No common wind, no custom'd event,

But they will pluck away his natural cause,
And call them meteors, prodigies and signs,
Abortives, presages and tongues of heaven.

Helena says (*All's Well*, I., 3) :—

Religious in mine error, I adore
The sun, that looks upon his worshipper
But knows of him no more.

Again she observes :—

Our remedies oft in themselves do lie
Which we ascribe to heaven.

Consider that speech of Miranda's when viewing
the shipwreck (*Tempest* I., 2) :—

O, I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer : a brave vessel,
Who had, no doubt, some noble creature in her,
Dash'd all to pieces. O, the cry did knock
Against my very heart. Poor souls, they perish'd.
Had I been any God of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth or ere
It should the good ship so have swallow'd and
The fraughting souls within her.

Note his representation of prelates in the historical plays. Their actions are always directed to worldly ends. The words of religion are on their lips, but ambition influences their lives. Gold, as Timon says, "will knit and break religions." Creed in Shakespeare rarely modifies conduct. The only persons exhibited praying are Claudius, the murderer, and Angelo, the hypocrite. Throughout he shows his characters as determined to action, not by their beliefs, but by their passions and affections, noble or ignoble. In this his point of view of human nature is that of Hume, Comte, and Schopenhauer. With his characters appeals to the supernatural are never real motives, but mere pretexts. Theology and metaphysics he evidently considered "words, words, mere words, no matter from the heart."

Finally, notice the Pagan way in which he refers to death. In *Measure for Measure* Claudio's imaginary fears are silenced by the reason of the Duke, who even in the garb of a friar declares—

Thy best of rest is sleep,
And that thou oft provokest; yet grossly fear'st
Thy death, which is no more.

How could a Christian put such sentiments in the mouth of a friar giving consolation, and make him say that death "makes these odds all even"?

Even pious King Richard II. is made to dwell on the thought of annihilation :—

Nor I, nor any man that but man is,
With nothing shall be pleased, till he be eased
With being nothing.

The sceptical Hamlet, having seen his father's spirit, speaks of death as the bourne whence no traveller returns, and utters as his last words, "The rest is silence." Prospero, in the passage appropriately put on Shakespeare's tomb in Westminster Abbey, says :—

We are such stuff
As dreams are made of, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep,

That is, as De Quincey says, "Our life is a little tract of feverish vigils surrounded and islanded by a shoreless ocean of sleep, sleep before birth, sleep after death." Could this be the view of one who accepted Christianity? No; Shakespeare's religion, if religion we term it, demands a wider name; it was that of Humanity.

(Reprinted) J. M. WHEELER

You may find all access to any species of philosophy, however pure, intercepted by the ignorance of divines.

Bacon

Letters to a Christian Friend

(10) THE UNFORGIVING GOD

MY DEAR CHARLES,

Following his warning against using "vain repetitions" in prayers, like the heathen (Matt. vi. 7-8), Jesus tells us :—

After this manner therefore pray ye :—

Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily (or, needful; Douay Version, supersubstantial) bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, *your heavenly Father will also forgive you: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses* (Matt. vi. 9-15).

"The 'Lord's Prayer' is entirely pre-Christian, being derived from the Talmud, Old Testament books, and Apocrypha," says Macleod Yearsley, F.R.C.S., in *The Story of the Bible* (1936 Ed. pp. 100-1). "The Jewish prayer 'Kadish' was founded on a Babylonian prayer or incantation to Merodach, possibly copied and altered by Ezra." It runs :—

Our father who art in heaven, be gracious to us, O Lord our God. Hallowed be thy name, and let the remembrance of thee be glorified in heaven above, and upon earth here below. Let thy Kingdom reign over us, now and for ever. The holy men of old said, Remit and forgive unto all men whatsoever they have done against thee. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil thing. For thine is the Kingdom, and thou shalt reign in glory, for ever and ever more.

Among other passages in the Old Testament we have :—

He that seeketh to revenge himself, shall find vengeance from the Lord, and he will surely keep his sins in remembrance. Forgive thy neighbour if he hath hurt thee; and then shall thy sins be forgiven to thee when thou prayest (Ecclesiasticus xxviii. 1-2, Douay Version).

Thine, O Lord is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven, and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all (1 Chron. xxix. 11).

The phrase in Matthew's Lord's Prayer, "For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever," is omitted by many authorities, including the Douay Version, and does not appear in Luke's account. Luke, too, instead of "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors," has "And forgive us our sins; for we also forgive every one that is indebted to us" (xi. 1-4). In Mark xi. 25-26, Jesus says :—

And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.

This point of the unforgiving God is very interesting. Not only should we forgive those who have offended us *in order to be ourselves forgiven*; but if we do not forgive them, neither will God forgive us for offending him and disobeying his commandment. The unforgiving God places himself on the same level as the unforgiving sinner he will not forgive—and, in any case, forgiveness is made a question of strict bargaining with God.

It is a point of view which permeates much of the Old Testament (for Jesus on the whole teaches the ordinary Jewish law and religion, with the addition of his own messianic claims), and the Christian writers after Jesus carry it on:—

For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment (James ii. 13).

Nor is God's lack of forgiveness for the unforgiving particularly understanding or sympathetic; in fact, he will hand them over to the "tormentors" (presumably the torments of eternal hell-fire). In Matthew xviii. 21-35 Jesus advises Peter to forgive an offending brother "seventy times seven," and tells the parable of the servant who was forgiven a large debt by his master, but promptly proceeded to throw into prison a fellow-servant who owed him a trifling sum, whereupon the angry master "delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise," adds Jesus, "shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

Note again Jesus's "big stick" policy. Do all these nice things I tell you about, he says in effect, and everything in the garden will be lovely for you; but if you don't do them, look out for yourself, for God will make you pay "the uttermost farthing" (Matt. v. 26).

In Luke xvii. 3-4 Jesus tells the disciples:—

Take heed to yourselves: if thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him (Lev. xix. 17: Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thy heart, but reprove him openly, lest thou incur sin through him, D.V.); and if he repent, forgive him.

And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

Then when Peter asks him in Matthew xviii. 21-22 whether he shall forgive his offending brother "till seven times," Jesus says, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times (which he does say in the above passage): but, Until seventy times seven."

But this comes immediately after the following passage:—

If thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he still neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church (or congregation): but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican (or, tax-gatherer, usually extortionate and harsh—Matt. xviii. 15-17).

We hear a lot about "forgiving seventy times seven," but not much about "let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican"!

Here seemingly the instruction is that we ourselves, like God, should not forgive the unforgiving, or rather the unrepentant. But if we do not forgive, fully and freely, how then shall we be forgiven? It's getting a bit complicated. But it is also coming down to earth a bit, and getting a bit muddy in the process. We have to make our "brother" repent and admit he is wrong before we start lavishing all this brotherly forgiveness on him; and if, despite all our efforts, he simply won't repent and admit that he has done wrong or been wrong, then we can with an easy conscience wash our hands of him and treat him like the outsider he is. Simple, isn't it?

And so for the present —

Affectionately,

R. H. S. STANDFAST

I Sez to 'im . . .

I sez to 'im, "Now look 'ere, Bill" (I sez), "We all know 'ow you feel about the Lord, but you don't 'ave to shove 'Im down our throats." I sez to 'im, "There ain't nobody 'ere wot don't respect religion in its place, but wot's the good" (I sez), "o' sayin' grace before an' after every pint o' beer?" I sez to 'im, "I ain't no atheist, nor communist, nor anythink like that, but I do like to 'ave a cosy chat over me arf an' arf or drop o' gin, without bein' disturbed by talk o' sin an' everlastin' fire, so 'elp me Gawd!" (I sez), "I know you take it all to 'eart but where's the 'arm in layin' orf a bit? No man was ever made all o' one part 'is stummick's just as lively as 'is soul, I sez let 'im indulge it while 'e can. I don't set up to be no superman. I goes to church on Sundays with the wife but there's a great deal more than that to life, an' Saturday to me is just as blest as that there everlastin' day o' rest. It's got some go, an' business gets more brisk." I put it to 'im, "Why I'd 'ate to think as anyone was takin' up the risk of 'ell eternal with a drop o' drink." I sez to 'im, "Bill," (I sez), "don't you fret, you'll save a brand out o' the burnin' yet, but don't you start on me," (I sez), "not me. I pays me rates an' taxes, an' I'm free to earn me livin' just as best I can. I puts it to you," (I sez), "man to man. You comes 'ere for your pint of arf an' arf, don't blame me if your fancies gets the larf." I thought I'd shut 'im up a bit, an' then—'e lifts 'is mild an' bitter to 'is face an' casts a narsty look about the place an' sez . . . "The Lord 'ave mercy on you all Ah-men!"

MARGOT DICK

(from *The London Mercury*)

Correspondence

FASCISM OR DEMOCRACY

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In your contemporary the *British Union Quarterly* of July-September, 1938, appeared an article of mine, entitled "Foreign Policy and Imperial Strategy," in which I said:—

"Though to-day, thanks to 'Baldwinism,' the muddle is complete, in my opinion it is not insolvable if we start at the right end of the tangle. That end is the historic Franco-German antagonism which, through the mushiness of the League of Nations has been transmuted into the democratic-autoeratic antagonism, which has divided the Old World into two hostile camps. France, Great Britain and the U.S.S.R. on the one side, and Germany, Italy and Japan on the other. The striking of these camps should be the primary aim of our foreign policy, so that our strategy may be reassured.

"To do so we must abandon all idea of alliances. Instead we must base our foreign policy on our geographical (strategical) position. Though of Europe, as an island, we are, nevertheless, apart from Europe: therefore we should mind our own business, and, as far as possible, keep out of European quarrels. In the Gangster world 'Baldwinism' has helped to create, we should say to Europe, 'We are sick to death of your bickerings, therefore our fixed policy is to concentrate on our own interests. Therefore we do not intend to enter into alliances; but instead we will guarantee two things: (1)

We will not tolerate a German expansion westward into France, Belgium and Holland, because we honestly believe that may end in our physical destruction; and (2) we will not tolerate Franco-Soviet war against Germany because we honestly believe that will end in our moral destruction.' These two guarantees would in time if not immediately, loosen if not destroy the two so-called axis, really triangles of Berlin-Rome-Tokio and Paris-Moscow-London, for both these groupings are unnatural, and have largely been created by our backboneless foreign policy.

"Outside of these guarantees we should guarantee nothing, and to render them effective as well as to render ourselves secure, we should build up a formidable instrument of war."

In spite of these clear statements, in the *Freethinker* of May 7, 1939, you have allowed the following remarks to be made:—

General Fuller would not object to an alliance with Hitler; he would obviously do anything to bring it about.

And:—

General Fuller's position is that rather than see us in alliance with a Government that is anti-Christian he would prefer us to be under the domination of Hitler.

As these statements are libellous, I must ask you to withdraw them and publish this letter and your reply in the next issue of the *Freethinker*.

J. F. C. FULLER

REJOINDER TO THE ABOVE

General Fuller completely overlooks the fact that the notes in the *Freethinker* were wholly based on a letter published in the *Times* for April 27—a fact that no one would gather from the above communication. We are, therefore, not concerned with what General Fuller wrote last July. The situation has changed since then, and the aims and conduct of German Fascism have become so plain to the world, that almost all civilized States reject them with loathing. These States recognize that none is safe so long as the present rulers of Germany feel safe to encroach on their territory or to dominate their political and social existence. This extends not merely to Europe, but so far afield as the whole of North and South America. General Fuller was also one who, as we said, was an invited and "honoured" visitor at Hitler's birthday celebrations, a fact which must be borne in mind when considering his position.

In the *Times* letter, with which our notes dealt, General Fuller avows his belief that our form of Government is outworn, and that "a new political idea, expressing itself as Fascism, National Socialism, etc., is inevitable. . . . In order to survive as a great nation, we must swim with the out-flowing tide . . . or be wrecked on the shore of self-fashioned ruin."

In the face of that we do not think we were wrong in attributing the readiness of General Fuller to support an alliance with Hitler, and his being one of two "honoured" British guests at the birthday celebrations, certainly points to his having no invincible repugnance to Hailing Hitler as at least one of his spiritual guides. Our statements appear to be a logical deduction from General Fuller's own statement.

General Fuller's objection to an alliance with Russia—an alliance of some kind is now admitted by clerics such as the Archbishop of Canterbury, by many of our leading statesmen, and by many of our leading newspapers as vital to our national safety—was based wholly in the *Times* letter, on the fact that the Government of Russia is anti-religious. He says, "Democrat or Fascist we are a god-fearing people, and at least several millions of us are to be found who are revolted by the idea of an alliance with Anti-Christ."

We may remind General Fuller that this statement is wholly irrelevant to the issue now before the British people. Such political freedom as we possess has nothing whatever to do with whether we are Atheist or Theist, pro-Christ or anti-Christ. There is no religious qualification for a vote, for eligibility for the post of judge or

magistrate, for occupying any civil post, or for being Prime Minister. These posts are as open to Atheists as to Theists. Nor has the proposed alliance with Russia any relation whatever to religious or anti-religious beliefs. There are, as a matter of fact, several agreements already in force between our own Government and that of Russia.

General Fuller raises no objection to these. The only one to which he does raise objection is that which is likely to affect the position of Hitler, and will affect the aim of Germany to dominate Europe, and, as Mr. Chamberlain has said several times—since Munich—the world.

We fail to see, therefore, that General Fuller has any grounds for taking offence at what was said in the paragraphs in our issue for May 7. The nation is now spending almost inconceivable sums of money on arming, and has even taken the first step towards general conscription. This has been done, avowedly, on the ground that some check to Hitler must be given, that he will stop—of his own accord—at nothing short of the domination of Europe, or the world. We do not think that anyone questions that to-day, save Hitler's friends in Britain and the handful of avowed Fascists here who so sedulously copy Hitler in statement, in mode of dress—so far as they may—and in their general behaviour—which includes a complete disregard for truth.

Perhaps General Fuller is disturbed at the words of the *Freethinker* paragraph, that "rather than see us in alliance with a Government that is anti-Christian, he would prefer us to be under the domination of Hitler." In that case we would point out that "domination" does not, of necessity, imply such rule as exists between an autocrat and his subjects, it may mean a domination such as exists when a people are controlled in the form of Government they have, and in the restriction of liberty to which they submit, in terms of suggestions, ideas, or even commands which they are unable to decline, or have no desire to repudiate. We do not think that General Fuller himself would deny that he is to a very considerable extent under the domination of Hitler's ideas, however much he would wish to see some of them modified when applied to this country. And we think his reference to Russia, in the face of the public declaration of so many of our prominent public men, leads one to the conclusion that those who do not believe in Christianity would have rather short shrift, if even they were tolerated enough to be permitted to exist.

EDITOR

WAR AND PEACE

SIR,—It is a bitter experience to realize that the giants of our youth have feet of clay; but it prevents our making gods of them. I have so often admired your calm and logical arguments that I have been tempted to treat all your arguments as logical, but your recent articles upon the political situation have shown me that you can be as easily swayed by propaganda as Anatole France was when he offered his services during the last war.

You coolly ignore the fact that as nations, both Germany and Italy have good cases against England and France. Passing over that, may I enquire upon what grounds do you regard the British Government as the guardian of liberty, freedom and democracy? Already there are enough acts upon the statute book, passed since the war, to turn this into a Fascist State immediately. What guardians of liberty Lloyd George and Churchill have been!

No, Mr. Cohen. Hitler and his friends are as bad a crowd as can be found nowadays, and all decent people must regret their treatment of the people who have opposed them. But who provided the money that financed the Nazi Party and why? And you are prepared to support a war that will entail the loss of millions of lives, and perhaps the destruction of our present culture (bad as it is, we have advanced a little) upon the fictitious plea that the "Peace" Alliance is going to punish Hitler, just as we were going to hang the Kaiser. Hitler could have drenched Germany in the blood of her Jews and Socialists and intellectuals, and Britain would not have murmured, unless it was approval from the *Daily Mail*. But Germany is threatening British imperial possessions, so we

have the alliance of the democrats, which includes Greece!! Poland!! and Russia.

As a working man I have noticed that after the common soldier has fought to exhaustion the people who have shouted all the slogans have sprung into their motor cars and aeroplanes, and away over the border; Zog, Dr. Negrin, La Passionara, Haile Selassie, the Kaiser. Their country or their lives. I think it time the common man made the same choice as the leaders, and chose to save his life. He may lose freedom, etc., but when you are ruled by the factory whistle and the foreman, it doesn't much matter what flag it's under. And Mr. Cohen you have had your allotted span, don't do or say anything which will rob the young of theirs.

GELMAT

[We have read the above with considerable sympathy, but nevertheless much of it is, in our judgment quite beside the issue. We have said, for many years, long before Hitler, that Germany had much of which it might legitimately complain of Britain and others. We have also pointed how frequently wars are brought about by financial manoeuvres, the setting up of senseless standards expressed in "owning colonies," etc. Much of what is said by our correspondent is actually suggested by the article he criticizes.

But we have never said that in no circumstances may a people go to war. There are occasions where to survive is a greater degradation than to be killed. That is a state to which Germany is rapidly moving, if it has not already got there. Certainly if it proceeds in its present course, the only compliment that one will presently be able to pay a German is to say that he is dead.

But our point in the article, against which complaint is brought, is that in the present situation we have to resist, either by the application of force, or by showing that we are able to apply force against, one of the most dangerous threats that has ever faced us, to whatever freedom or liberty, or sense of human dignity we have.

To repeat what we have said many times. In normal circumstances one might watch the conquest of one people by another with comparative equanimity. But when we have all that makes a human life worth living threatened by a brutal and ignorant gang such as now controls Germany, then we have the choice of either a cowardly submission or to resist by force, taking the gains of the sinister interests in our midst as part of the price we pay—to retain the chance of dealing with these interests later. We do sincerely hope to help the young generation to live a freer and better life than we elders of the present day have ever been able to live. And if we are to meet and overcome our domestic wrongs, we must make ourselves secure against the threat which at present faces us. We must deal with situations as they are.—C.C.]

PROGRESS AND TABOOS

SIR,—After reading the Editorials on "Taboos," in the *Freethinker*, April 16 and 23, they seem to point to the following conclusion.

The Taboo, or its civilized equivalent, the supernatural sanction, originates nothing whether good or bad. It merely, as we have read, sets the supernatural seal upon beliefs and practices current in human societies, primitive or highly civilized. And in accordance with evolutionary progress, both as regards conduct and beliefs, the taboo is bound to keep pace with them (it is doing so now under our own eyes) until by throwing off its supernatural trapping it arises, like "a new Phoenix" clothed in the garments of humanity, and human progress, not excluding its responsibilities towards the animal world to which we owe so much.

MAUD SIMON

IMMORTALITY

A toy which people cry for,
And on their knees apply for,
Dispute, contend, and lie for,
And if allowed
Would be right proud
Eternally to die for.

Ambrose Bierce.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

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

LONDON

INDOOR

SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1) : 11.30, Professor G. W. Keeton, M.A., LL.D. —"The Future of the British Commonwealth."

OUTDOOR

BETHNAL GREEN AND HACKNEY BRANCH N.S.S. (Victoria Park, near the Bandstand) : 6.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

KINGSTON-ON-THAMES BRANCH N.S.S. (Market Place) : 7.30, Miss E. Millard.

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

SOUTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Brockwell Park) : 6.30, Mr. J. M. Pyne. Rushcroft Road, opposite Brixton Town Hall, 8.0, Tuesday, Mr. J. Barker. Undine Street, Tooting, 8.0, Friday, Mrs. E. Grout.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park) : 7.30, Wednesday, Mrs. Buxton and Mr. Carpenter. Thursday, 7.30, Mr. Saphin. Friday, 7.30, Mr. Barnes. Sunday, 3.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes and Collins. Sunday, 7.30, Messrs. Bryant, Barnes, Tuson, Wood and Mrs. Buxton.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

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

OUTDOOR

BLACKBURN MARKET : 7.45, Sunday, Mr. J. Clayton.

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

CHESTER-LE-STREET (The Bridge End) : 8.0, Friday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

EDINBURGH BRANCH N.S.S. Assembly Week Campaign—Saturday, 8.0; Sunday, 7.0; Monday and rest of week, 8.0. Mr. George Whitehead will speak.

FOULRIDGE : 7.45, Friday, Mr. J. Clayton.

HIGHAM : 7.30, Tuesday, Mr. J. Clayton.

MANCHESTER BRANCH N.S.S. (Eccles Market) : 8.0, Friday, Bury Market, 7.30, Saturday, Ashton Market, 7.30, Sunday. Mr. W. A. Atkinson will speak at these meetings. Stevenson Square, 7.0, Sunday, Messrs. G. H. Taylor and C. McCall, Junr.

MIDDLESBROUGH (Davison Street) : 7.15, Wednesday, Mr. J. T. Brighton.

NORTH SHIELDS (Harbour View) : 7.0, Tuesday Mr. J. T. Brighton.

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

History of the Conflict Between Religion and Science

BY

Prof. J. W. DRAPER

Price 2s.

Postage 4½d.

SELECTED HERESIES

BY

CHAPMAN COHEN

Cloth Gilt 3s. 6d.

Postage 3d.

PAMPHLETS FOR THE PEOPLE

CHAPMAN COHEN

No. 13. Thou Shalt not Suffer a Witch to Live No. 14. Freethought and the Child

- No. 1. Did Jesus Christ Exist?
 2. Morality Without God
 3. What is the Use of Prayer?
 4. Christianity and Woman
 5. Must We Have a Religion?
 6. The Devil

- No. 7. What is Freethought?
 8. Gods and Their Makers
 9. The Church's Fight for the Child
 10. Giving 'em Hell
 11. Deity and Design
 12. What is the Use of a Future Life?

Each Pamphlet Contains Sixteen Pages

Price One Penny

Postage One Halfpenny

"Freethinker" Endowment Trust

THE *Freethinker* Endowment Trust was originally registered on August 5, 1925. Until that date the practice had been for many years to issue an annual appeal to make good the deficit on the issue of the paper. It was suggested by some of the constant subscribers that in order to do away with this annual appeal subscribers should capitalize their gifts and create a fund which would bring in an amount adequate to cover the inevitable deficit on a paper of this description. This was done, and a sum of £8,000 subscribed in a little over two years. When the two years losses had been made—the annual subscription was suspended during the raising of the £8,000—there was left a capital sum of just over £7,000 for investment. The income at an all round yield of five per cent did not meet the deficit, but we have managed to get along. Of late nearly half the invested capital has been repaid, and re-investment involved a loss of income. There has in addition been a rise in the cost of printing and also of wages.

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.

The Registered offices of the *Freethinker* Endowment Trust is 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4. Letters may be addressed to either the Secretary or to the Editor of the *Freethinker* at this address.

DETERMINISM OR FREE-WILL?

An Exposition of the Subject in the Light of the Doctrines of Evolution.

By CHAPMAN COHEN.

Half-Cloth, 2s. 6d.

Postage 2½d.

SECOND EDITION.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.4.

SOME CHRISTIAN TYPES

by

CRITICUS

Price 4d.

By post 5d.

THE PIONEER PRESS, 61 FARRINGDON STREET, E.C.4.

MEAT EATING INVOLVES CRUELTY!

Why not try the Vegetarian Way?

Free Literature, including Recipes, from The Vegetarian Society, 57 Princess Street, Manchester, 2

ANNUAL CONFERENCE of the NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

A Public Demonstration

IN THE

MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

TOWN HALL SQUARE, BRADFORD

Whit-Sunday, May 28th, 1939

Chairman - - CHAPMAN COHEN

SPEAKERS:

J. T. Brighton, G. Bedborough, Mrs. Muriel Whitefield,
J. Clayton, L. Ebury, J. V. Shortt and R. H. Rosetti

Doors open 6.30 p.m.

Commence 7.0. p.m.

Admission FREE.

Reserved Seats ONE SHILLING Each

FIFTH SERIES

ESSAYS IN FREETHINKING

CHAPMAN COHEN

ABOUT BOOKS
THE DAMNED TRUTH
MAETERLINCK ON IMMORTALITY
ON SNOBS AND SNOBBERY
JESUS AND THE B.B.C.
MAN'S GREATEST ENEMY
DEAN INGE AMONG THE ATHEISTS
POLITICS AND RELIGION
CHRISTIANITY ON TRIAL
WOMAN AND CHRISTIANITY
WHY?

MAN AND HIS ENVIRONMENT
THE NEMESIS OF CHRISTIANITY
GOOD GOD!
GOD AND THE WEATHER
WOMEN IN THE PULPIT
ALL SORTS OF IDEAS
ACCORDING TO PLAN
A QUESTION OF HONOUR
ARE WE CHRISTIAN?
A STUDY IN FALLACY
MEDICAL, SCIENCE AND THE CHURCH

Price 2s. 6d.

Postage 3d.

1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th Series, Two Shillings and Sixpence each Volume

Five Volumes post free 12s. 6d,