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Views and Opinions

Gods—Ancient and Modern

SOME time back I gave up my usual space in this paper to one who had never before contributed to the *Freethinker*. I allowed Mark Twain to write the "Views and Opinions" for that week. Everyone appeared to like the change and asked for more of the same sort. Some were so enthusiastic that they asked for much more, for a regular run of that kind of thing. I marked the character of their implied, but very economical praise of my own contributions by bearing their request in mind—and filled up the space as it had been filled hitherto. Hearty praise of my own writing, given in that form is open to misunderstanding. But this week I am introducing a second very great writer to occupy my place, and calmly await the invitation to make some more selections. In the absence of such suggestions readers will have themselves only to blame if I go on as usual.

My contributor this week is a great Freethinker who belongs to that twilight period of ancient culture, the second century of the present era. Lucian was born in Samosata about 130 A.D. He was a friend of another critic of Christianity, Celsus, whose writings the Church was able almost completely to destroy. There is only one complete translation into English of the works of Lucian, a copy of which is before me as I write. This consists of two bulky volumes (12 x 9) each volume running into about 800 pages. The date of this edition is 1820, and it is a copy in which a book-lover delights—pages clean and edges uncut. Moreover, it is the only copy of the work I have come across in many years of book-hunting.

Lucian wrote with all the wit of Voltaire and with a hatred of shams and impostures equalling that of the great Frenchman. Above all he hated superstition in all its forms. His "Illiterate Bibliomaniac" depicts a character that is found in all ages in the man who fills a room with books in the belief that it will give him credit for a man of learning. *The True History* is the forerunner of such classical works as

Gulliver's Travels and of *Munchausen*. And his dialogues of the gods is a fine impeachment of more than the gods with whom he deals, it strikes at the root of belief in any god. Above all, the work of Lucian is as fresh as when it was written. His real subject is human nature in its varied manifestations; that they were Romans or Greeks of whom he was writing is but a mere accident of time. A reading of Lucian goes far to commend the policy of the man who said that every time a new book comes out he reads an old one.

* * *

The Gods at Bay

Lucian wrote over seventy dialogues of the gods, and they could have been written by none who was not a complete Freethinker. The most striking of these to most of my readers will be the one with the title *Jupiter the Tragedian*. It will illustrate what I have just said concerning Lucian's modernity and his Freethinking. The scene opens in heaven where the gods are holding a meeting presided over by Jupiter, the chief deity. Jupiter is disturbed by the state of affairs, and explains to Juno, his wife, that the state of things is such that their very existence as gods is in question, a matter of "whether we are any longer to be acknowledged and adored on earth as gods, or neglected by the world and accounted as nothing." The trouble has been brought to a head because Jupiter has been an unseen listener to a discussion between one Damis, an Atheist, and Timocles, a Theist. The debate was left unfinished, but it is to be resumed the next day, and the worst of it is that the Atheist appears to have it very much his own way. It is, says Jupiter,

no trivial matter if you reflect that all our honour, our consequence, and our revenue, depend upon mankind; let them once be persuaded that there are no gods, or that they at least give themselves no concern about human affairs, and we shall lounge about heaven in perfect idleness, be annoyed with languor and suffer hunger.

Momus, a very minor god, who has little to lose, says it is all their own fault. What can they expect when men see the confusion and disorder that prevails, how the best and the most blameless are left helpless, while the most vicious and most profligate are left to perish? "And we, forsooth, are angry if men who have not lost all understanding dwell upon these things." After further discussion as to what can be done, with complaints that while Damis is cool and well-equipped, and seems to have a great many people with him, Timocles trembles, loses his temper and looks as though he will "ruin the game," the gods decide on listening to the finish of the debate. They go to Athens and find Timocles, when he is unable to answer Damis, calling names. Jupiter exclaims:—

Our man has the best of it by far, in scolding and abuse. Bravo, Timocles! Give it him soundly; there lies your strength. If you rely upon arguments, he will soon strike you mute as a fish.

One could not describe more succinctly the general policy of Christian defenders when I first entered the Freethought movement, fifty years ago. And it still remains substantially true to a considerable extent, although the form of it is outwardly more polite.

Timocles undergoes something in the nature of a relapse into a reasonable mood in reply to a question by Damis, asking for reasons why anyone should believe in the gods. He replies:—

First, the order that is observable in all nature; the sun and the moon which always keep their regular courses; the seasons of the year, the vegetation of plants and the propagation of living beings, and that they are so artificially made for feeding, thinking, etc. All this appears to me as the work of a providence superintending the world.

Damis replies:—

You must be very much distressed for proofs, Timocles; inasmuch as you make that into a proof which is the question, and ought first to be proved. That there subsists a certain connexion among things, I readily agree; but it is not therefore necessary to straight away believe that it is in consequence of a preconceived plan. What you term arrangement is perhaps nothing but necessity. And yet if one does not immediately agree with you, you fall into a passion.

Timocles appeals to the authority of great men who have believed in the gods. Damis retorts by pointing out that great men in different countries, and even in Greece, believe in all sorts of gods. Which is the correct view? Timocles shifts the ground to the sacred oracles, as the modern Christian used God as a proof of the inspiration of the Bible, and then cited the inspiration of the Bible as proof of the existence of God. Timocles asks Damis whether he has ever been to sea, and reminds him that

the ship but for the helmsman could not have made its voyage; and can you believe that the universe holds on its course straight forward without a pilot and director?

The gods who have been listening in fear of the way the argument has been going, are cheered a little by this argument, which might, in substance have been taken from any recent work in defence of Theism, and Jupiter says:—

There, Timocles has for once adduced something to the purpose.

Damis replies:—

But O, great friend and minion of the gods, Timocles, you will also, of course, have remarked that the pilot keeps in evidence whenever it is necessary, and issues out the proper order to the sailors. . . . Whereas your other pilot, whom you hold qualified to govern this larger ship orders nothing properly. There is frequently neither a tackling nor a rope in the right place. . . . There among the sailors themselves you will often see a lazy, lubberly fellow who knows how to handle nothing properly. . . . Had it a commander who kept an eye on everything and maintained a proper order, he would know how to distinguish the good from the bad and treat everyone as he deserved.

Momus mournfully reminds Jupiter that the Atheist is "sailing on to victory." Jupiter agrees, remarking that "Timocles has absolutely nothing to bring out, but such trite everyday stuff that may be overturned by a finger." If we could get into touch with Jupiter we might remind him that the position is the

same to-day. There is not a single argument for the existence of God that is now in use which is not fundamentally on all fours with the fallacious arguments of Timocles. All that the best have done is to ape scientific terminology and redress the argument in more obscure language. Timocles has been reincarnated in every modern Christian apologist. Folly changes the colour of its dress, but the texture of its clothing remains unaltered.

Timocles asks the bystanders how they can listen to such blasphemies without stoning the blasphemer to death. This, it will be remembered, is a sentiment that keeps the blasphemy laws alive and a judge, without seeing what kind of an exhibition he is making of himself and the law will solemnly inform a jury that their verdict will depend upon whether the accused has talked about God in such a way as to invite a breach of the peace. Theists remain as fundamentally absurd as ever. But to Timocles, Damis gives the obvious retort that if the gods do not interfere by doing him an injury, why should anyone else get into a temper? But, then, such frail things as gods have always had to be handled delicately, and protected carefully. Driven into a corner Timocles falls into direct abuse—another not altogether neglected weapon to-day, although not usually expressed so plainly:—

You still jeer me, you god-robbing, villainous, halter-sick miscreant. Does not everybody know that you father was a tatterdemalion, and your mother no better than she should be? That you murdered your brother, and are guilty of other execrable crimes, you lewd, lying, rascally, abominable varlet, you.

The listening gods are not over-pleased with the end of the debate. Jupiter remarks, "Damis goes laughing away, and the other follows at his heels, railing and raving. It appears to me as though he is going to throw a tile at his head. And what are we to do now, since the affair has taken such a wrong turn?" Mercury offers a little consolation:—

Methinks the comic writer, Menander, is right when he says "make as if some mischance has not befallen thee, which has; so it has not befallen thee." For what great calamity is it at last, if some few persons go home in the persuasion that Damis is in the right? Those who are of the contrary opinion, always form by far the majority; the Greeks in general, the vulgar and the dregs of the populace, with the barbarous notions, are all on our side.

That is the close of *Jupiter the Tragedian*, and it might, with an alteration of some terms have been written to-day. In all the centuries between ourselves and Lucian nothing new has been said on the side of the gods. No genuinely new argument has been invented, no new and pertinent facts have been discovered. The plea for God has grown more wordy, and less definite, the argument has become more involved, and whereas in old pictures gods are often depicted as sitting *on* a cloud, to-day they are found lurking *behind* one—a cloud of words. To the informed mind there are no new arguments to answer, there are only involved and wordy statements which require flattening out. The parting criticism of Damis by Timocles, that he is a blackguard and a scoundrel is not so plainly stated to-day as it was in the time of Lucian, and as it was when I first set out on my youthful crusade against one of the most stupid of surviving superstitions. To-day the argument in the mouth of such men as Dean Matthews is that if we dismiss belief in the survival of the bogeys of Lucian's time then the foundations of morality are destroyed. And to that one can imagine the shade of Lucian replying to the Dean:—

But, O Timocles Matthews, if I am not worse in my behaviour than they who believe in god, who are frequently worse than me and my kind, of what moral value is God after all? Nay, if I can be as good without your Jupiter as you are with him, do you wish me to believe that the followers of Jupiter-Jehovah are, naturally worse than I am? Are you not saving your god at the expense of the character of his followers? Is it really to-day, as it was in my time, that the god must depend for the majority of his supporters on "the vulgar" and the mentally barbarous, who always form the majority?

But, I must stop. This contributor, like Mark Twain, tends to take up too much space. Still he will have helped us to understand the continuity of human thought, and the fundamental identity of human problems—which means also the fundamental similarity of human nature. It may also be that it is neglect of these considerations that burdens us with so many religious prophecies of to-morrow, to be followed with revised prophecies for the day after.

Perhaps I may give on another occasion a sketch of other dialogues from this second century Free-thinker. The "Sale of the Philosophers," and the "Illiterate Bibliomaniac," would well serve.

CHAPMAN COHEN

The Conflict between the Pontiffs and the State

WITH the overthrow of the Roman dominion in Western and Southern Europe, the Church schemed to secure its independence, and even aspired to control the secular power. In the Eastern Empire, however, which survived the Western for many centuries, the State retained its supremacy. Justinian, the Eastern Emperor, combined theology with statecraft, constituted himself his own persecuting Pope and compelled prelates and even Church Councils to obey his behests concerning faith and morals. However, dictatorial this procedure may appear to ultramontane minds, it for a considerable period silenced the controversies and sanguinary tumults which convulsed the Western State and made the Greek Church permanently subservient to the civil authority.

After the conversion of Constantine and the establishment of Christianity as the State religion, no ruler save Julian ever appeared, who proved capable of curbing the ambitions of the hierarchy. As the temporal authorities declined in power, the Roman populace perforce regarded the Bishops of Rome as their helpers in adversity. No doubt the beneficent offices of the early Popes have been magnified by clerical chroniclers. But the story runs that Pope Leo I. so successfully interceded with Alaric that this fierce barbarian withdrew his army of invasion after inflicting comparatively little injury. Also, when a Vandal expedition raided Rome, its leader is said to have granted the Pope's request to spare the inhabitants. Later, when the seat of Roman administration was removed to Ravenna, the Pontiffs seemed the sole surviving directors of the departed Pagan Empire.

The barbarian intruders having adopted the heretical teachings of Arius, the Popes presumably treated them as fellow Christians, although the Church was irrevocably committed to the orthodox Athanasian creed which the Arians sternly repudiated. For as Mr. J. A. Spender shrewdly observes in his interesting and suggestive *Government of Mankind* (Cassell, 1938, 2s. 6d.), "the Church even in these early days appears to have had the faculty which it never lost, of accommodating itself to circumstances which it was

powerless to control; and it lived on tolerable terms during his long reign with the Arian Theodoric whose policy in religion, as in most other matters, was to live and let live."

But the Trinitarian dogma was ever dear to the heart of the orthodox Catholic hierarchy so when the Franks became predominant and their ruler, Clovis was converted to the Cross, he championed the Catholic doctrine already widely accepted in Gaul, and thus he secured the support of the priesthood. So, in a proclamation, the recently enlisted barbarian leader declared war on the Arians resident in that province. "Let us march with the help of God," he suggested, "and reduce them to subjection." This astute appeal to martial emotion served to consolidate the semi-independent Frankish tribes. Evidently, "No one measured more accurately the mixture of brutality, treachery and religiosity which was the stock-in-trade of the conqueror of this age."

The Christianized barbarian rulers who succeeded Clovis, when tested by their nefarious conduct, clearly proved that their adopted creed had done nothing to soften their savage character. Indeed, all that the annalist of the time could urge in extenuation of their misdeeds was their consistent loyalty to the orthodox faith. Also, while the credulous Frankish tribes had been bemused by the Church through threats of hell and hopes of paradise, their native rulers were only too willing to utilize the superstitions of their subjects so long as the Papacy permitted them to retain their political independence.

In the middle of the sixth century the Teutonic Lombards raided Italy and their depredations destroyed the remnants of Imperial Rome. When their conquests were completed, the greater part of the peninsula was theirs. The Exarch at Ravenna was now the solitary surviving representative of the fallen Empire, whose authority had shrunk to that of a local leader. Yet, even this disaster proved advantageous to the Church, so far as it released the Popes from secular control. For Gregory the Great utilized the opportunity to restore both the spiritual and temporal supremacy of the Church, a policy perpetuated through succeeding centuries to attain paramount authority throughout Christendom.

With the Roman breach with the Greek Church in the eighth century, which resulted from theological differences, the Papacy found it expedient either to come to terms with the Lombards or perhaps with greater advantage to enlist the services of the Franks. Lombard ascendancy in Italy menaced Papal authority and even threatened to reduce the Pontiffs to a state of vassalage, while the comparatively distant Franks seemed likely to prove more amenable. Therefore, Gregory III. despatched the keys of St. Peter's traditional tomb to Charles Martel and proffered him the suzerainty of the dwindled Roman State. Charles declined his suggested promotion, but his son and successor, Pepin, considered that valuable advantages might thus be secured and, unfortunately for the peace of the Christian world, Pepin in his profitable negotiations with the Papacy admitted the power of the Pontiff Zachary to appoint or dethrone kings, a concession employed by the Holy Fathers to justify sacerdotal claims for supremacy over secular sovereigns with which they pestered the Western States for ages to come.

So, to safeguard the Holy Church from Lombard dominion, the Pope invited Pepin to Rome to release him from Lombard tutelage and, in the two expeditions the Frankish ruler undertook for this purpose, he forced them to surrender the region from Ravenna to the Eternal City. Thus were the Papal States established as an autonomous territory, an action which precluded a united Italy for more than a millenium.

But the Vatican was soon at variance with its own disaffected subjects, as well as the Lombards. Pope Hadrian then solicited the assistance of Pepin's successor, Charlemagne, to restore order. That famous ruler entered Italy, deposed the reigning Lombard, and proclaimed himself the King of the country. Twenty years later, however, the Pope was again in trouble, and his rebellious lieges charged Leo III. in 798 with cruel and wanton oppressiveness, and nearly murdered him as he was journeying in solemn procession through the Roman streets. He recovered, however, from his injuries and fled to the Frankish Court, whence Charlemagne conveyed him to Rome under escort.

Charlemagne later proceeded to Rome, where the Pope had been exonerated officially of the crimes imputed to him. There, on Christmas Day 800 A.D., the artful Pontiff diplomatically staged the celebrated scene of Charles the Great's Coronation in the venerable church of St. Peter. Thus was ratified the uneasy alliance of the secular and spiritual powers so momentous in its sequel. For the time being, however, all the various nations composing Charlemagne's Empire: Christian Gaul, German, Frank and Italian owed allegiance to the Papacy as supreme Pontiff, as well as to the Emperor crowned in St. Peter's as the civil administrator of the Pope's ghostly authority.

Again, this compact gained the Crown greater authority over its powerful and ambitious subjects. For, as Spender notes, "the bishops were more and more encroaching on the secular sphere. They had great estates; they claimed the right to govern them in their own way and to administer their own kind of justice; even to raise forces for their own defence. Many were rich and worldly, and ranked with dukes and counts, who were beginning to create the new thing called the feudal system. With the Pope on his side the Emperor could work his will with them; with the Pope against him, they were potential centres of rebellion ready to stab him in the back whenever he was in difficulties if he did not do their will."

During Charlemagne's lifetime this system functioned, but with his death insuperable difficulties soon arose, but it was not until the closing years of the twelfth century that Papal pretensions were completely displayed. Then the Popes claimed the right to treat princes as mere vassals, and to excommunicate them when they manifested an independent spirit. Innocent III. placed France under interdict in 1195, and imposed the same penalty on England in 1206, while for centuries the kingdom paid tribute to the Pontiff. To circumvent this domination, secular rulers schemed to evade the spell cast by the priesthood over their intimidated subjects. As open disregard of Papal decrees proved inexpedient, princes sought to place the Pope under control. So in 1309, the French arrested the Holy Father and moved the Papal Court from Rome to Avignon where it remained during "the seventy years' captivity," while serving as an instrument of Gallic policy.

Gregory XI. returned to Rome in 1399, but rival Popes were set up and frequently two or even three claimed authority. In the Eternal City itself, the shameful conduct of the Papacy caused the Roman citizens to banish Pope Eugenius IV. and rebel against his successor, Nicholas V. But with the aid of mercenary soldiers these Restoration Popes suppressed the insurgent people without compunction, and murder and massacre were conducted on a wholesale scale.

Yet, while the criminality and licentiousness of the Pontiffs were notorious, priestly influence over the benighted peasantry persisted. As Spender reminds us, that unspeakable scoundrel Alexander VI.

asserted "that in virtue of 'the authority Almighty God granted to us in St. Peter and by the office which we bear on earth in the stead of Jesus Christ,' it was for him and for him alone to apportion the territories discovered by Columbus and Vasco Da Gama, and the Kings of Spain and Portugal meekly admitted his pretensions."

But the crash was soon to come. The revival of letters and the new departures necessitated by the progress of geographical discovery, with the enlargement of industry and commerce, combined to lessen the prestige of the sacerdotal order. The Lollard movement in England heralded the revolt against priestly domination and the Tudor sovereigns, Henry VIII. and Elizabeth built better than they knew in resisting and overriding Papal arrogance and audacity.

T. F. PALMER

Society and the Individual

If we accept with all its implications the teaching of science, which tells us that the genetic constitution of any given generation profoundly affects the succeeding one, it will be difficult to regard with equanimity the excess of births from genetically inferior stocks.

Such knowledge as is already available does hold out the promise of man taking part control of his own evolution, for better or worse. That knowledge constitutes the scientific content, and the use made of it the artistic content, of Eugenics.

Decisions affecting the latter are likely to touch foundational problems in Freethought. Who are the "unfit"? Who is to decide as to their fitness? Is their "unfitness" a criticism of the society in which they live? Is their "unfitness" related to society in such a way that they are eminently fitted for a different state of society, perhaps better than the present one? Are they only "unfit" when placed in a society which, to its discredit, cannot use them?

In any case, ought we to think of society before the individual? Does the individual exist *for* society, or society *for* the individual? Would a strict application of eugenic principle have some affinity with Fascism, in which the rights of the individual must at all times give way to the needs of the State?

In his contribution to *Science in the Changing World* (a symposium), J. B. S. Haldane pleads that society should be constructed to suit the individuals. As an ardent Freethinker he therefore jibs at any far-reaching eugenic proposals. He repeats the doctrine that society should conform to its individuals in *The Inequality of Man* (1932), in a 1933 broadcast and again in *Heredity and Politics* (1938). If Jersey cows do not thrive in the Highlands of Scotland, he argues, we should not conclude that they are useless. Similarly if Highland cattle do not prosper in the Jersey conditions the remedy is not to stop breeding them, but to find conditions suitable to them.

Bringing the analogy down to human affairs is to find whether it is valid. We have our mental defectives, many of whom, on account of their condition, are not lured to death by the ceaseless repetition of routine work. They will repeat the same manipulation endlessly. If, then, society can offer such work, of a useful nature, then they are not "unfit," and they become a social, not a biological, problem. If they are not found suitable employment they may be designated "feeble-minded," and efforts may be made to breed them out.

The occupations of shepherd or pigherd have often

been admirably filled by men of very inferior intellect. I once encountered an old shepherd in the North of Yorkshire trudging home and repeating aloud, "Ah'm gween hame!" ("I'm going home"), apparently to impress upon himself his singleness of purpose. Prof. L. P. Jacks, with his character Snarley Bob in *Mad Shepherds*, has, I think, made some defence of them. Cases of zoophilia in Central Europe have often been associated with such workers; mental depravity can thus be associated with working efficiency.

Proper supervision could conceivably assure adequate employment for defectives, and solve a problem in which the biologist need take no further interest. Without this supervision, of course, there would be the danger of releasing the unfortunate victims into the wage market, where they might soon become little better than slaves, as well as forcing wages down (as has happened in Denmark).

To turn them out into bitter economic struggles, argues Haldane, is morally retrograde. Man is in this respect distinguished from most other animals. Care and pity are an essential part of civilization.

I have endeavoured to state the case for making society fit the individual as strongly as briefly possible, and I believe the argument is not without flaw.

What we require is an ideal state in which social needs, and individual abilities to supply those needs, fit like hand to glove. But we should not forget the factor of evolution. As social needs, or social visions, become more and more complex, we have to ask whether they can best be fulfilled out of the available material. The athletic zest of the medieval sportsman, for example, was well satiated by the tournament, which to-day we should regard as insane.

The needs of any drab sort of society can be met by individuals of the qualities desired. But can we make the best society conceivable out of the individuals we are likely to get? If not, then the realization of a gap between society actual and society conceivable is likely to create discontent. No artist is satisfied in recognizing an inferior work.

Is this putting society as an end in itself, and individuals as merely the means to that end? I think not, for this fallacy rests on a failure to see that we are not dealing with two separable things, viz., (1) society, and (2) individuals. We are dealing with one thing, namely a society of individuals. It is the same entity, whether we view it collectively or in particulars. The grammatical separation is a matter of legal and social convenience. The separation is most useful so long as we do not regard it as signifying two independent realities.

As a better society of individuals becomes conceivable, one in which higher reaches of culture may be attained, the genetic quality to be transmitted should receive attention. Otherwise, if we let nature take its course, and let the qualities and abilities of the individuals produced decide what kind of society shall accrue, we naturally run great risks of retrogression. A society of pig-herds is, of course, preferable to a society of warmongers, but even in our present world warmongering for its own sake is being narrowed down to a minority of civilized peoples.

We have often been told by Theists that there is Purpose in the evolutionary process. The findings of science give no support whatever to that idea, but in eugenics there is at least a chance for man to infuse purpose into the biological realm.

This is exactly the view of J. S. Huxley. Speaking at the British Association meeting of 1936, he remarked that natural selection was efficient in its way, at the price of extreme slowness and cruelty. Blind and mechanical, its products were quite likely to be

æsthetically, morally and intellectually repulsive. Not only was natural selection not the instrument of a God's sublime purpose; it was, he said, not even the best mechanism for achieving evolutionary progress. He repudiated the idea of any extraneous purpose in nature, and any idea that nature could safely be left alone, or left in the hands of providence. "Any purpose we find manifested in evolution is only an apparent purpose. It is we who read purpose into evolution. If we wish to work towards a purpose for the future of man, we must formulate that purpose ourselves."

Eugenics is thus well in harmony with an atheistic view of life. It is another step towards taking the control of affairs out of the hands of supposed Deity. Thus it is not surprising that churchpeople are among its bitterest opponents.

I seem to discern a rather serious fault in Haldane's argument that society should be fitted to the individuals, in that it takes the long view. And in this case the long view is apt to be upset by such rude questions as "What about Hitler?" Where we speak of "society" we should more properly speak of "societies." Hitler is the head of one society, the Tokio Government of another. Let us imagine our own Government taking Haldane's advice to the letter, over a long period of time; that is, waiting to see what turns up from the stock without interference, and then fitting the social standards accordingly. Over the same time imagine a powerful Fascist combination elsewhere breeding its individuals and making them toe the line to meet the needs of an increasingly powerful military state, to bring about the realization of this concrete aim, with the motto, "Only the strong have rights." The law of the survival of the fittest would then operate in all its brutal intensity, in utter disregard of ethical values.

To-day is no time for the construction of anarchic utopias, and the usual milk-of-human-kindness attitude of many anti-eugenists merely indicates a failure to connect theories with realities.

G. H. TAYLOR

Letters to a Christian Friend

(20) CHRISTIAN, BOND AND FREE

MY DEAR CHARLES,

The "Christian spirit" can be seen at its clearest in relation to slavery. Slavery also happens to be the direction in which it is seen to least advantage socially; but I do not choose it for that reason (indeed, I consider it inevitable that these two aspects should coincide), but solely because it is here that the Christian spirit shows its fundamental nature in clearest outline, free of extraneous considerations that so often confuse the issue.

We have seen that ancient slavery was not condemned by Christ nor protested against by the early Christians; that negro slavery, when it arose, was similarly accepted as an institution by the Christian Churches; and that abolitionists were met by the Christian objection that the "appeal to Scripture was shown either not to condemn slavery, or was held positively to justify it."

On ancient slavery Prof. W. L. Westermann, of Columbia, is quoted by Lord Stamp (*Christianity and Economics*) as follows:—

The growth of a new public attitude towards the slave class in the west, reflected in a series of legislative enactments by the Roman Emperors, is part of a general spiritual change, the sources of which are difficult to trace. Neither Stoicism nor Christ-

ianity was a primary or direct agency in the application of the new spirit to slavery, since both fully accepted it as a working economic and social institution. Believing there would be no spiritual difference between bond and free, both Stoic and Christian were indifferent to slavery although advocating humane treatment for slaves, in the one case as members of the fraternity of mankind, in the other as children of God (*Encyclopædia of the Social Sciences*, XIV. p. 77).

Perhaps this will help you to see more clearly the fusion in the Christian of elements which may appear contradictory, but which are quite consistent, as the natural outcome of his faith—his compassionate attitude towards the slave as an individual, and his indifferent attitude towards the individual as a slave.

You may recall Miss Rosalind Murray's explanation in *The Good Pagan's Failure* that the reason why "the Christian strikes the Pagan as indifferent to justice; he often takes less trouble to right abuses . . . he does not bother enough about putting the world to rights" is that "the Christian, too, would claim that he loved justice . . . but justice for him would consist in different things. He would not say that cruelty and oppression did not matter, but he would say that they were not ultimate; he would say that how you endured or faced an evil was more important than the evil itself . . . that the final value was not here or now."

The life of St. Peter Claver gives a good example of this attitude (she continues). He worked for thirty years among the slaves in Cartagena, through the cruellest and most heart-rending phase of the slave trade; he gave himself utterly to the service of slaves, living and working among them, sharing their intolerable conditions, to save their souls, but, so far as one can learn, he made no attempt to stop the trade.

One cannot but admire such men and their work (whatever their hopes of spiritual reward), but with admiration goes pity for their limitation of moral and practical vision, and contempt for a creed which spends their humane impulses in mitigating the evils of an institution while perpetuating the degrading institution from which those evils spring, by accepting it as divinely ordained and beyond challenge.

We have already had a picture of this moral and social limitation in the early Church generally, which "was not concerned with the humanitarian view that institutions and even moral laws involving great suffering to men and women must be wrong. The law of God was in essentials known and must be accepted, come what might. Man was made for no other happiness here on earth but the happiness of accepting that law and of taking with contentment that lot which it would allow him."

As with the old slavery, so with the new. "When the traffic in Negro slaves became of economic importance from the fifteenth century, the Church often fell to the plea that it afforded an opportunity to convert the slaves to Christianity," says Lord Stamp. "The discovery of America opened a new era for slavery. From the first the system was encouraged, but humane treatment was the subject of legislation, and it was usually urged that the slaves should be taught the Christian Gospel." We find Richard Baxter expressing the Christian view of 1673 thus in his *Christian Directory* :—

Remember that even a slave may be one of those Neighbours that you are bound to love as yourselves, and to do to as you would be done by if your case were his. Make it your chief end in buying and using slaves, to win them to Christ and save their souls. . . . Let their salvation be far more valued by you than their service.

Again, you see, the complete subjection of the human and social elements to the "spiritual" conception. It was not wrong to deprive a Negro "neighbour" of his human and social freedom, and to keep his body and spirit in slavery, provided that you presented him with the far more important "freedom" of the "city of God," and gave him the opportunity of embracing the alien faith of Christianity so that he could appear before God as a "free soul." Christians, so long as they acted with certain humane considerations, need not hesitate to buy and use slaves; indeed, there should be an encouragement to them to do so in the opportunities it gave them to "preach the tidings" and save the souls of their less blessed "black brothers." As for the slave, he should doubtless be only too pleased to be deprived of home and homeland, family and freedom, in order to receive the blessed benefits of this "greater freedom"; and when he had dutifully become a good Christian, well, he wouldn't worry anyway, because as a good Christian he would then have learned to be content with his lot of slavery, knowing that it was part of the divine law, which had been allotted to him by God, and would be balanced by God in the glorious afterwards. A nice little circle!

The next time you hear or read the usual blah about the "Christian tradition of freedom" or how Western civilization is based on the "essential Christian belief in the separate freedom and rights of the individual soul," remember what the "Christian tradition of freedom" really is. Remember that a "free Christian" may be a Christian slave.

Remember this vital distinction between what the Christian means (or has meant) by freedom, and the only sense in which freedom really means anything to us to-day—man's individual, social and spiritual freedom as a member of a human community.

To the Christian, viewing this life from the aspect of "ultimate values" which are based not on this life but on the "other world," the slave is not the worse off by reason of being a slave. He may, "ultimately," be better off than the free man, the poor man may be better off than the rich, and so on through all the varieties of human conditions.

To the Christian, it is only the slave's relationship to God (through Christianity's exclusive rights) that makes him "free," and only the individual evils and abuses of slavery that call for mitigation; to the humanitarian, it is the condition of slavery itself that is its worst evil.

Spiritually, the Christian is interested in the slave as a "soul," the humanitarian is interested in him as a human being; socially, the Christian is interested in the slave as a slave, the humanitarian is interested in the slave as a free man.

But though a slave may be "free" in the Christian sense—though, indeed, a Christian may be best serving the "Christian tradition of freedom" by making slaves of his fellow-men—a slave can never be a free man in the humanitarian sense. Nor can a progressive civilization be based on any conception of freedom other than that of the humanitarian.

You have probably been thinking as you read this, that it is a distortion of what you believe, and of what you consider the Christian spirit to be. Of course it is, but only in the sense that facts must necessarily "distort" theories which are not true to those facts.

You have probably been thinking that many or most of the Christians you know would certainly not avow to-day—certainly not as nakedly, anyway—the views on slavery and freedom which have been held so consistently by Christians in the past, and which historically must be ascribed to the Christian; they

would deny such views for themselves and would claim those views which I have described as humanitarian. But this does not prove that in doing so they are acting as Christians, or that those views which they support are Christian. What a man calls himself is not necessarily what he is. (Nor, of course, is he necessarily what others call him!) It means simply that whatever these Christians call themselves, they act to a greater extent to-day on humanitarian grounds.

You may object—especially as the teachings of Christ naturally do contain certain humanitarian elements—that it is manifestly unfair to accept as truly Christian those views and actions of Christians which happen to support my theory, while rejecting those which do not so readily support it. On the surface (except that you appear to be playing the same game yourself!) that seems a reasonable objection. But there is more in it than just an adroit selection of facts. We have a definite criterion to judge by—the teaching of Christ as embodied in the Gospels, and interpreted in other early Christian documents. A man is not a Christian simply because he thinks the same as you or is a “good man” from our modern point of view; he is a Christian, good or bad, only if and when he believes and acts according to the teachings or spirit of Christ. It is not just a matter of labelling Christians according to one’s own view, and totting up the “goods” and the “bads”; it is a matter of judging what is claimed to be Christian and un-Christian by the standards which Christianity itself sets up, those teachings which are its source and its criterion. However, the mixture of Christianity and humanitarianism is something that we must leave to be sorted out another time. Kindest regards to all for now.

Affectionately,

R. H. S. STANDEFAST

Acid Drops

It is regrettable that many people who write on the Kingship do not take pains to discover the facts regarding it. The Kingship, like many semi-outworn institutions, had its origin in sheer superstition. We note that Mr. J. T. Flynn, in the *New Republic* (U.S.A.), makes the common error of attributing the original bearer of the Kingship to “a man who was a ‘natural’ leader,” a mis-statement one hardly expects in a responsible paper such as the *New Republic*. Mr. Flynn is, however, we are glad to see against the unreasonable booming of the King and Queen’s recent visit to the United States, and expresses the hope that

no more of them will come here to give the American people the opportunity to make damn fools of themselves.

It is about time that a paper such as the Roman Catholic *Universe* reflected upon the advice that Lord Palmerston is said to have given his Cabinet—that it didn’t matter what kind of a lie they told so long as they all told the same lie. One moment we are told by the *Universe* that Christians are not allowed to practise their religion in Russia, and the next we get the information that *Pravda*, the U.S.S.R. semi-official paper, is annoyed because belief in Christianity is so wide-spread. And this is not in an underground form, but “People continue to attend religious ceremonies, customs and festivals, the 25 churches in Moscow are always filled to overflowing,” “parents bring their children in thousands to be baptized,” and “pupils sometimes leave school to take part in religious ceremonies.” What confidence the *Universe* must have in the short memories of their readers?

The Rev. Murray Walton contributes his mite towards lessening the war-time strain by saying that “Faith in God brings certain staying powers of which man himself knows nothing.” We do not seriously disagree with this; in fact we would enlarge it to the extent of saying that *anything* in which a man believes is likely to bring him satisfaction, provided it is not of a direct and immediately poisonous character. Whisky, or carting round a mascot, will work just as well—up to a point. But Mr. Walton need not have turned a general psychological truth into a howling absurdity. For, if a man knows nothing of the effects of a belief, how on earth does he become aware of it having any effect at all? We generally look for at least a strain of foolishness in parsonic counsel, but it need not be so glaringly foolish as Mr. Walton makes it.

We have never concealed our hatred of the Nazi treatment of all who have dared to disagree with their creed and practice. This journal did not wait until 1939 to express its detestation of what we all know was happening in Concentration Camps. The very first sufferers were Freethinkers, Jews and Communists, while some English editors and politicians were applauding Hitler and Hitlerism. If a few Christians like Pastor Niemöller—to the latter we offer our heartiest praise for his protest against tyranny—suffer loss of freedom, what are we to say to those numerous Christians, Catholic and Lutheran, who glorified Hitler at the very moment when he was outraging the elementary decencies wherever his dominating rule prevailed? Imagine then what lovers of liberty all over the world must feel to read the editorial comment of the *Guardian*—the Church newspaper. In the course of a discussion about Nazi motives, it doubts whether the Germans are trying, by a parade of cruelty to allay their own fears:—

Inside Germany there could be no such need. The chief rulers might be afraid of liberty for men like Pastor Niemöller, but the young men who are encouraged to torture old and feeble Jews for no reason but their race, have no fear unfortunately. No doubt these young men are especially brutalized, but yet they represent the rising generation, brought up with no fear of God.

It is the worst and commonest of Christian lies to suggest that disbelief in God is a characteristic of German Nazi persecutors, or that Atheism has anything at all to do with what the Dictators are doing, except that Atheists always suffer when Dictators persecute. Anyone who is capable of an intelligent analysis of German Fascism knows full well that the Hitler movement is fundamentally religious in its appeal to the German people, and Hitler has declared over and over again that he regards himself as an instrument of God. That his god is a little different from the orthodox Christian God is beside the point. Even among Christians there are different ideas of God.

Freethinkers may well sympathize with the sad plight of the many Christians earnestly seeking to reconcile Faith with Fact. A most pathetic instance of a mind suffering from such vain attempts is shown in a letter from the late “Dick” Sheppard to Laurence Housman, which appears in the correspondence published by Capes (*What Can We Believe?* 7s. 6d.) Wrote Sheppard:—

I do not love suffering . . . and I dislike all that talk about how lovely it is to suffer. I think it is a rotten process, which has nothing whatever to do with God; at least, if God causes suffering, and delights in it, I do not delight in believing in Him. I know it may do me good—that is, if I take it decently, but I know it is as likely to embitter mankind as to convert them. There is a great deal of rot written, isn’t there, about how beautiful it is for us to suffer? I sometimes hope that I may learn the lesson in my little suffering, but I never think that God has a hand in it, and I always think He wants it to end.

Only by the complete acceptance of Atheism can the tortured religious mind find relief from such problems. Atheism does, at least, fortify the mind against false

imaginings, baseless fears, morbid seekings and pessimistic findings that so beset the lives of most who go to religion for consolation.

The Pope warned the American nation in a special message, the other day, "of the evils which have resulted from the denial of God, blind egotism, the thirst for pleasure, divorce, birth-control, no respect for authority—particularly religious—and neglect of duty," and many other things which the Church has always fulminated against throughout the ages. There is nothing new in these attacks, but a Pope has to do something to justify his existence and position and this particular one no doubt feels, or has been told, that the United States may one day become wholly Catholic. In any case, he adds in his message that he rejoices that "the American Press and radio are giving such vigorous assistance to the spread of religion," and particularly wants "still closer contact with the directions of ecclesiastical authority"; that is, the American Press and Radio should call in the priest so as to be properly directed from Rome. How the American people like this sort of thing logically carried out, it would be interesting to learn.

The *Universe*, however, points out how great has been the spread of Roman Catholicism since Pope Pius VI. established the first diocese in the country at Baltimore 150 years ago. We are told that "the churches are crowded, there is an enthusiastic demand for Holy Communion, and to-day the United States has 19 ecclesiastical provinces, 115 dioceses, nearly 200 seminaries, and innumerable churches, monasteries, colleges, hostels and hospitals." After this one wonders why the social life in America has been so severely attacked, unless the Pope wishes us to believe that the only people entirely free from all egotism, thirst for pleasure, etc., are the saintly Roman Catholics of the United States. In that case, why are the hordes of gangsters, racketeers, bumpers-off, and other criminals to such an extent sincere Catholics? Why, even on the pictures it is nearly always a Catholic priest who has to administer the "last rites" to the villain of the piece getting his well-deserved punishment.

The most interesting thing about the whole matter is that Catholics all over the States are imitating the Pope, and fulminating against the "godless" education given in the schools and "the Materialism and Atheism rampant everywhere." Particularly bitter is the attack on the John Dewey group at Teachers' College, Columbia University, the educational theories of whom are described as "a completely atheistical philosophy which logically amounts to the dehumanization of man." And the awful consequences of the work of the group mean "that our schools will become anti-religious and atheistic," says Fr. O'Connell, in attacking the possible secularization of education in American schools. All we can say is that Catholics cannot have it both ways. Up to now the education in the United States has been religious—and the result has been the attack on America's morals by the Pope and his followers. Things could not possibly be worse under Secular Education, and we hope the authorities will put into practice the ideas and suggestions of the John Dewey Group, which may ultimately mean complete Secular Education, an ideal thoroughly in keeping with the progress of civilization and the emancipation of the human race from superstition and credulity.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel finds war-time a particularly unfitting one for bringing people "to Christ," and the secretary, Bishop Hudson, is very, very perturbed about the Society's future outlook. He does not want "merely to carry on," he wants "progress," with plenty of prayer and money; particularly money, we expect. At all events he wants "every home to have its own missionary-box and use it." Another very good suggestion in these days of prosperity is that every Christian should offer, for missionary work, one day's income, or one day's wage. It is a pity that we shall never be able to find out how many Christians fall

in gladly with this suggestion. It must be a source of great comfort in war-time to feel that the Society is roping-in for Christ a few poor natives from let us say, the African wilds. We often wonder which gladdens our missionaries' hearts more, a few saved souls or a rattling good income from the mugs.

We take the following from *The Indian Thinker*. We hope "Enquirer's" legitimate curiosity will be gratified:—

Sir,—A Travancore correspondent to a Madras daily reports the return of one, Rev. Father C. N. Thana Ramban, of Pathanamthitta, from Oxford, after completing higher studies in Theology. Will you give your readers the benefit of his answer to the following questions regarding Christian Theology?

1. Does he believe in the creation of the world at the fiat of a supreme power—completed at the end of six days?

2. Does he believe that the entire species of human kind was derived from two female parents—Adam and Eve?

3. Does he believe that they were created susceptible to the temptation of disobeying the Creator's mind and that the tempter was also a fellow-creature of man, who need not have been created with power or desire to tempt the fellow-creatures to offend their common Creator?

4. Had not the Creator reserved to himself the power to forgive an act of his creatures for which he himself was responsible in the last resort?

5. Are the theories of vicarious punishment and beliefs in eternal heaven and eternal hell, humanly understandable?

6. How does Christian theology—that affirms a single life and ascribes all the offerings and sufferings of post-Adamite men to inheritants as opposed to one's own acts—explain the sufferings of man and differences and inequalities between one human being and another?

ENQUIRER

"Let your light so shine before men" is a text on which the Rev. E. T. Bradley, rector of Stoke Hammond, Bletchley, has gone astray, for he was fined £3 for allowing light to stream through three bays of his windows. On being warned of the offence, this man of God cried out upon the officer of law: "Go away you brute! You scoundrel!"—Seems as though E.T.B. had been interrupted while offering up prayers for peace, doesn't it?

Fifty Years Ago

LORD ROSEBERY won the applause of the Glaswegian Liberals by remarking that "the world without a Church—he did not mean an Established Church—would be a chaos of blank selfishness, and statesmen would have to seek and establish a religion among the people simply as a curb to vice, an incentive to virtue, and a great civilizing agency." We have said that Lord Rosebery is a humorist, but this humour was really too subtle for his audience. What a picture! that of the statesmen, without a religion, seeking one and setting it up to keep the mob in order! As for "blank selfishness," it would be well for "statesmen" to mind their own business, which does not include the supervision of our morals. There is as much selfishness among politicians as among any other class of men, and their assumption of superior virtue is unspeakably grotesque.

The long and the short of Lord Rosebery's view is that religion is a first-rate police agency, and an indispensable instrument in the art of governing. But these very reasons should make it odious to honest and intelligent men. Morality will always be able to take care of itself if priests do not mystify it, and statesmen do not cultivate it. It is founded on human nature, it displays itself in society, and it needs not the patronage of religions or governments. It has flourished in the cottage when priesthoods were full of corruption, and statecraft was little else than pillage and chicane. And it will flourish all the better when statesmen confine their ambition to practical business, and churches cease preaching lies in the name of truth.

The Freethinker, December 1, 1889

To get a New Subscriber is to make a New Friend

THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4

Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

- F. S. WARNER.—We are pleased to receive the warm congratulations of the West Ham Branch.
- J. HUMPHREY (Glasgow).—Glad you thought the address a "real tonic." Hope its effects will be lasting.
- T.L.—You will probably find what you want in Westermarck's *Early Beliefs and their Social Influence*. The man who leaves out the play of early ideas in primitive life and their growing influence in later stages of social evolution will never formulate a scientific account of the development of society. Short-hand formulae on such subjects are nearly always unsatisfactory. Nature simply refuses to live up to them. I think this must be the reason for our coming across such curious phrases as "Fascist science" on the one hand, and "Proletarian science" on the other. We have only paid attention to simple science.
- G. H. TAYLOR AND A. HANSON.—Held over till next week.
- G. BAILEY.—Very pleased to hear of your assault on one of the "closed" areas of religion, and we wish you all success in your next effort. The West of England needs—from the Freethought point of view—a good stirring up.
- All Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to "The Pioneer Press," and crossed "Midland Bank, Ltd., Clerkenwell Branch."*
- The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.*
- Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.*
- Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.*
- When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.*
- 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.*

Twenty Five Years Ago

THE Christian Deity is the Lord of Hosts. He is also a man of war. He taught David's hands and fingers to fight. He planned those awful campaigns of the Jews against the original inhabitants of Palestine.

A change of gods would be better than nothing. But the best thing would be to have no God at all. Whatever deity men worship only echoes their own passions. He is an Edison machine, speaking back what is first spoken into it. He never says anything new or original. He informs us of what we know, and never tells us of anything fresh. He corroborates our opinions, flatters our emotions, and pats our characters on the back. He is never ahead of us. And why? Because we make him. We are not *his* creatures—he is *our* creature. And those who worship him, we repeat, are worshipping an idol. Far better would it be if we framed our ideal consciously and deliberately. It would then be always up to date, and somewhat beyond. It would be the essence of our best thoughts, our deepest principles, our noblest aspirations. Communing with that ideal, bringing ourselves to its test, even looking at it from time to time, would do us more good, and raise us higher in the scale of being, than could ever be done by bowing to the personification of the lower conceptions of our forefathers.

"Jubilee Freethinker Fund"

It would be ungracious on my part if I did not, in closing this fund, say a word of thanks for the generous response that has been given to it. An appeal for financial help could not have been made at a more unfavourable moment. It came late in a series of similar calls appealing strongly to supporters of advanced movements, and when in addition, thousands of businesses were being closed down owing to war conditions and Government regulations. But I have never, during the many years I have been responsible for the maintenance of this journal, had to ask in vain for whatever help was required, nor have I had to wait long for what was needed. It is a knowledge of the reality of this situation that enables me to face whatever crisis may arise, no matter how critical it may be. I will only say THANK YOU to all—in capital letters—and thanks also to all who would have sent but who have been prevented doing so for reasons that all will understand and appreciate.

I have also been touched by the many letters of warm personal appreciation sent, only a few of which I have publicly acknowledged. I prefer to put these very high estimates of my own work as partly due to my fifty years of constant work for Freethought having weakened the feeling that I am just an ordinary human being, and converted me into something like an institution. After all, fifty years touches three generations and includes two. Very commonly I come across young men and women whose parents I was instrumental in plucking from the religious fold. This sometimes gives me the feeling of living in the present, but belonging partly to the past—becoming a kind of living impersonal feeling that belongs to the past, a kind of realized continuity of non-personality. In some cases I have actually known and enjoyed the friendship of four generations of the same family. The last two generations have become, in a sense, part of *my* family, and I please myself by believing that they in some way regard me as a kind of extra parent. I hope I shall never do anything to forfeit that feeling.

But I have had some grumbles. One is that I ought not to close the Fund so soon. Well, I dislike long-standing appeals. They become an eyesore to me, and I think they would become such to others. I have never begged; I merely give those who are interested in the Cause an opportunity of helping. As I have often said, the *Freethinker* and its readers form a co-operative movement in which each helps in his or her way and in proportion to their interest.

I held off for as long as was possible without taking unwarrantable risks. I had the drag of past deficits and the demand for an incalculable expenditure in the present and the immediate future. I am glad to acknowledge what has been done. The paper situation is in some respects more serious than it was in 1914, but I have made the *Freethinker* safe for some time. My exact financial commitments in that direction cannot be exactly stated, as it will depend upon the length and severity of war conditions. But I think we shall pull through without any diminution of the size of the paper, and other difficulties will have to be met as they arise. It will be a hard fight, but so was the last war-period. Strategy is not confined to the army, and *our* war will not be over in three years. It will continue for ever, with each victory a stepping-stone for new triumphs, with an army in which there is not and never can be conscription.

There has been another grumble about my refusal to accept the testimonial proposed by the National Secular Society, and which readers tell me they were expecting, in recognition of my half century of con-

tinuous service in the Freethought movement. I think this achievement is unique in our history, and I should have valued some permanent memento. But it would have been unwise to have mixed-up the two things, and the welfare of the paper was the more important. So I compromised by saying that I would take the response to my appeal as covering both purposes. And I have taken it as that. That all the subscriptions go in the one direction is an accident of the situation. If it will satisfy anyone he or she may reckon that half the amount was given by *me*—after others had given it *to me*. That ought to please everybody.

Perhaps in another ten years, when I have registered a Diamond Jubilee the testimonial may materialize, and in a state of octogenarian senility I may play with a handful of treasury notes and imagine I have a collection of art treasures.

I have space for noticing only two or three letters received. The first is from Mr. R. H. Clifton, whose membership of the N.S.S. ante-dates mine, who writes "as a reader of the *Freethinker* for 50 years, who heard Bradlaugh on several occasions, who was greatly thrilled by the wonderful eloquence of our late chief, G. W. Foote, and finally as one who admires your very able editorship of one of the most wonderful papers in the world." Mr. Clifton is a Member of the Board of Directors of the Secular Society Limited, and of the N.S.S. Executive, as well as Treasurer of the last named Society. His acquaintance with Bradlaugh and Foote warrants one feeling proud of his tribute.

A reader of but twelve month's standing, Mr. Williams, writes thanking me for "the undoubted comfort and inspiration derived from the *Freethinker*." Mr. T. Borland, says, "I owe you a lot of money for a liberal education. You have made philosophy and science clear to me on many points that were before obscure."

I must rest here, with a final word of thanks for what has been done, and the very warm friendliness of most of the letters received. I should be less than human not to have appreciated them, and to receive renewed encouragement to get on with the work. Some of these letters will receive attention next week. I believe they will be as interesting to my readers as they have been to me.

Previously acknowledged, £479 2s. 7d.; Leslie S. Robertson, £5; Mr. & Mrs. R. Solomon, £1 1s.; E. G., 5s.; C. H. Smith, 10s.; T. Borland, £1; H. Williams, 5s.; J. Arnott, £1; E. C. Saphin, 10s. 6d.; H. R. Clifton, 10s.; H. J. Bayford, £1 1s.; J. White, £1; Mrs. A. Shiel, 2s. 6d.; J. C., 5s.; A. Harris, 2s. 3d.; S. Olsen (Norway), 10s.; J. Musi, 2s. 6d.; Crippled Miner, 2s. 6d.; M. A. Robinson (Aged 82), 2s. 6d.; Newcastle N.S.S. Branch £1 1s.; S. D. Merrett, 10s.; W. Richards, 2s. 6d.; S. Berry, 2s. 6d.; "Glasgow," £2 2s.; For Jubilee Trust, 3s.; J. Green, £3 3s.; A. E. Stringer, £1; "Appreciation" (Birkenhead, G. W. Rly. Group), £1; C. Blee (Rutherglen), 10s.; A. Reader, 2s. 6d.; 53 Years Subscriber, 2s. 6d.; Per Glasgow N.S.S. Branch, £4; Ismaelite (4th Sub.), 2s. 6d.; Florence P. Walter, £1; J. W. Bray, 10s.; Mrs. M. Davies, 5s.; Mrs. Marie Fisher, £1 1s.; F. Marschal, £1; A. Cornberg, 5s.; Winifred Shinton, 5s.; West Ham N.S.S. Branch, £1 1s.; A. V., 6s.; H. Pointer, 5s.; W. A. Williams, 1s. 6d.; W. Turner, 1s. 6d.; C. E. Turner, £1 1s. Total, £513 15s. 10d.

Corrections—"C. Moon" should read C. Moore, and "Nelson Branch," should read Chester Branch, in last week's list.

The above represent sums received up to and including November 28. We shall be obliged if errors either in names or amounts are pointed out.

CHAPMAN COHEN

Sugar Plums

To-day (December 3), Mr. Cohen will deliver an address to the Leicester Jewish Literary and Dramatic Society on "The Foundations of Religion." The Society meets in the Leicester Jewish Club, New Bond Street. The meeting is an afternoon one. Chair will be taken at 4.30.

The Central Hall, Glasgow, was crowded on Sunday for Mr. Cohen's address on "Fifty Years of Freethought," and there was no doubting the appreciation with which it was received. Mr. Hamilton took the chair with his usual ability, and a few questions brought a very successful meeting to a close.

A visit to Glasgow, absorbing three whole days out of an already sufficiently crowded week, has compelled our holding over until next week a number of letters and paragraphs which would otherwise have received notice. Never a lover of lengthy railway journeys, the home run took over ten hours of scheduled time, the longest time we have experienced to complete this journey in the course of about forty-seven years. That meant arriving home late, and a rush to the office for Tuesday's work on the paper. Our readers will look kindly at any delay that occurs in attending to communications. But the journey to Glasgow was well worth the extra labour.

The Annual Dinner of the National Secular Society, originally fixed for January 13, has now been postponed to a later date. Conditions are too uncertain at the moment for such a function, but it is hoped to fix a date before the beginning of May. Notice will be given as early as possible.

One of the first casualties of the war in the publishing field is the *Cornhill Magazine*, founded in 1860, with Thackeray as the first editor. This is to be suspended for at least the duration of the war. But it is very unlikely that it will be re-issued with the return of peace. We could better have spared other publications.

It is good to learn that in the case of children evacuated from the towns there has been an increase in weight, and a general improvement consequent on better feeding. That, we repeat, is good news. But the real lesson lies in the obvious admission that these children were so badly fed and housed that a transference of conditions and better feeding has led to a marked improvement in a few weeks. We trust that this lesson will be remembered when the war is over, and that the pat on the back by distinguished visitors to the *contented* poor will be heard less of, and that it will be replaced by a determined discontent so long as the children are not housed decently and fed plentifully.

The Liberation of Germany, by Martin Abbotson (Watts and Co., 2s. 6d.), adds one more to the spate of anti-German books published since the war. While adding nothing new to the general run of books of this class, Mr. Abbotson does summarize a statement of facts and of the general position that will be useful to those who have not the time for a longer, and often more involved, volume. In the course of 132 pages, Mr. Abbotson provides a summary of facts, with sharp and justifiable deductions from them that will serve a good purpose for a good cause. Quite plainly the criminal character of Hitler and his followers is set forth, backed up by citations from official documents and warrantably drawn conclusions.

But the number of books and pamphlets issued in this country since the outbreak of war, only gives increased significance to the question, "Why this rush?" There is not a book or pamphlet published since the war began—including the Government White Paper concerning the indecent brutalities of the concentration camps—that was not well-known by the Government and by

all who could, by any stretch of the expression he said to be "in the know." The robberies of people by Storm Troops, the secret police, the cupidity of Goering, Goebbels and Co., the robbery of Jewish shops and homes, the indecencies to men and women in concentration camps, all these were well known, but nothing was said except by a paper here and there. Mr. Abbotson suggests that he tried to bring the facts contained in his book to the notice of the public, but was prevented doing so. One would like to know exactly by what this unavowed, but very effective, censorship was managed, and what was it that led high Government officials to conceal information in their possession from the public. With greater freedom, and greater candour Munich might have been prevented, the Hitler gang dispersed or weakened, and the present world-war might never have developed.

On "Dethroning" Shakespeare

The two articles by Minnermus and Mr. H. Irving, in a recent number, fully justify, I submit, my contention that even Freethinkers cannot keep their tempers when arguing with an "anti-Stratfordian." This is a pity, for it proves how very difficult it must be for a Christian, seeing his religion violently attacked, to be tolerant and urbane. The Shakespeare question is purely an academic one, and should raise no heat; but it does, and so one must put up with it. All we can wish for in the ultimate is that some people will be interested and intelligent enough to examine the problem for themselves. It will pay them immensely, and help, not only to enlarge their knowledge of Elizabethan drama, but will also introduce them to a very fascinating literary puzzle. Whoever Shakespeare was, it can be confidently asserted that the last word has not been said about him.

First of all, may I point out that with the exception of one small paragraph, I did not deal with the arguments put forward on behalf of Edward de Vere as the writer of the plays? These would require a fairly hefty volume now to contain them. All I was concerned with was, in pointing out that in the opinion of many competent critics, if it was possible to deduce from the plays of Shakespeare the writer's religious opinions, it was pretty obvious that, if not altogether an Atheist in our sense of the term, he was a very confirmed sceptic; and that therefore if Edward de Vere was the real author of the plays, he must have been either a sceptic or an Atheist. In quoting the latest judgment on this point by Capt. B. M. Ward, who is the official biographer of de Vere, I proved it beyond all cavil. I certainly made no attempt to show why I believe the Earl of Oxford wrote most of the plays of "Shakespeare." But I am not quite stupid enough to claim that because de Vere was an Atheist he therefore must have written them.

For Minnermus, anybody who questions the authorship of Shakespeare must be a follower of "poor, mad Delia Bacon." He has said so a number of times to my knowledge during the past 40 years, in almost the same unmistakable and wearying *clichés*. I am not concerned with defending either Bacon, or "poor mad Delia Bacon," from his very angry and out-of-date Victorian arguments, any more than I would oppose Freethought arguments because "poor" J. M. Wheeler died in a lunatic asylum. I prefer to take the argument as it stands without indulging in hopeless and contemptible personalities. To say that Baconians "are just out for unadulterated self-advertisement" is simply untrue though I should prefer to use a shorter word. I am no Baconian myself, but I would find it a very easy matter indeed to meet Minnermus armed only with the weapons the Bacon-

ians use—and I have no fear of the result. He disposes "so easily" of Bacon's claims, of course; but where Minnermus manages to do so in a paragraph, John M. Robertson took in his *Baconian Heresy* over 600 pages. Evidently Robertson, who was a very fine Shakespearean scholar, thought the Baconians had something of a case; though naturally he could not have been so well equipped for his task as the erudite Minnermus.

In any case, Robertson would never have made the ridiculous blunders we find Minnermus so proud of. For example, we are told that the fact that the plays of Shakespeare "were four times collected in a single volume," proves that William Shakespeare was the author. "Angels and ministers of grace defend us!" In these four volumes we have *Sir John Oldcastle*, *Thomas Lord Cromwell*, *The London Prodigall*, *The Puritan*, *A Yorkshire Tragedy*, *Tragedy of Locrine*, as well as *Pericles*, the three parts of *Henry VI.* and *Titus Andronicus*. Did Shakespeare write *them*? Certainly, answers Minnermus, they are all in "a single volume." After this criticism, the less Minnermus says about Shakespeare the better for his own reputation. Moreover, he actually claims that it was the lady with a "bee in her bonnet" who *first* queried the authorship of the plays. 'This is just nonsense.

It is extremely difficult to find out also from the many identical articles on the question that Minnermus has written whether, in dethroning "Shakespeare," he means the man or the works. For example, he tells us that "Carlyle, always chary of praise, said that we could better afford to part with our great Indian Empire than to part with the *works* of Shakespeare." And this is followed by "And this is the *man* these scribblers seek to dethrone from his proud position." (Italics mine.) I leave it to the ingenious reader to extricate himself from Minnermus's hopeless confusion. But perhaps the answer is, "It is Lucifer, star of the morning, hurled from heaven, and nuzzling with ignoble and superb stupidity among the litter and abominations of the gutter." At least, if that is not the answer, I give it up.

Then we are loftily told that "Shakespeare had a Grammar School education, than which there is none better, and his friend, Ben Jonson, who knew him well, testified as to his knowledge of Latin and Greek." What Robertson would have said of this kind of "learning," I dare not tell. But really the beautiful picture of the Stratford Grammar School in Elizabeth's time with its wonderful equipment for teaching Latin and Greek—and a dozen other recondite subjects for that matter—is just "pure unadulterated" imagination. There is not a scrap of evidence whatever to show us what sort of a school it was. But one can say with every confidence it was *not* a modern Grammar School; and one can add also that there is *no* evidence that Shakespeare ever attended it. And *did* Jonson testify to his "knowledge of Latin and Greek"? Why, the exact words Jonson used were:—

And though thou had'st small Latin and less Greek,

which, of course, in Minnermus's opinion, means that he was a superb scholar in both languages—which, as a matter of fact, *was* the case with the writer of the plays. The ordinary reader would only see in Jonson's line that William Shakespeare knew precious little of the two languages.

Shakespeare's mother must have been "a rare woman to have had so rare a son"!—much, I suppose, as the mother of Charles Dickens must have been a rare woman to have had "so rare a son." Shades of Mrs. Nickleby! I really must be excused from trying to answer this kind of "argument."

Like Minnermus with his "poor, mad Delia Bacon," Mr. A. W. Davis feels also that as the reasons given for claiming Edward de Vere as the rightful author of the plays are the same as those given for Bacon (which they are *not*), if Bacon is demolished, exit de Vere, and he sends me to Andrew Lang's *Shakespeare, Bacon and the Great Unknown*, and Robertson's *Baconian Heresy*. I am afraid that Mr. Davis must put up with the fact that I know these two books very well. No one indeed has a greater admiration for John M. Robertson than I, but I am not convinced that he demolished the Baconian heresy. At the same time, may I ask Mr. Davis whether he contends that Robertson stood by the authorship of the Shakespeare plays as being exclusively by William Shakespeare? If he does, will he quote chapter and verse?

Mr. Irving, I was glad to see, did not drag in Bacon, but twitted me in being bitten "by this aristocratic bug." In other words, I believe, he contends, that Edward de Vere wrote the plays of Shakespeare because he was the Earl of Oxford. Is Mr. Irving serious? If he is, then I must quote the well known epigram of Schiller against him—"Against downright stupidity even the very gods can make no headway."

I should like also to add "against downright ignorance." Mr. Irving actually submits "Isn't it more reasonable to assume that the poems and plays of Oxford the noble patron of the Theatre were 'tittivated' by Shakespeare?" That is to say, that William Shakespeare at Stratford was actually "tittivating" the poems of Edward de Vere, the aristocrat and favourite of Queen Elizabeth's Court—at the age of six. I have an idea that even Robertson would have exclaimed at this kind of tosh, "God help me from my friends!"

Finally, may I say that I am as fully aware of the orthodox case as any believer. The "facts" about William Shakespeare are repeated *ad nauseum* one writer from another, and no attempt, or very little, is made to produce the evidence upon which the "facts" are based. Mr. Irving, for instance, is entitled to believe as he pleases, but it is quite useless for him to say that Shakespeare, meaning, of course, the Stratford man, "was accused by Green [sic] of borrowing the feathers of the University wits," without at the same time giving me the reference, and showing that this interpretation is admitted by all orthodox critics. The particular passage in Greene has been discussed a little too much for Mr. Irving so airily to quote it. And as for accepting a myth on "flimsy" grounds that is a matter of opinion. I am quite convinced that it is the myth of William Shakespeare which is accepted on less than flimsy grounds; and just as I have tried in my little way to show that there is no evidence whatever that such a god as Jesus Christ ever lived, so I hope—but not necessarily in these pages—to help to prove that the plays of Shakespeare were not written by William Shakespeare of Stratford; and that their most likely author was Edward de Vere, the Earl of Oxford.

H. CUTNER

There are states of moral death no less amazing than physical resurrection; and a church which permits its clergy to preach what they have ceased to believe, and its people to trust what they refuse to obey, is perhaps more truly miraculous in impotence, than it would be miraculous in power, if it could move the fatal rocks of California to the Pole, and plant the sycamore and the vine between the ridges of the sea.—*Ruskin*.

The Gentle Shakespeare

The longer I live, and the more I study Shakespeare, the more I am convinced that he was the unparalleled humanist in the literature of the world.—*G. W. Foote*.

HUMANITARIANISM was an integral part of his character. Dubbed "the gentle Shakespeare," this trait is so marked in his writings, that it is difficult to understand why it was not remarked upon freely. In an age of fierce religious fanaticism, when Catholic burnt Protestant, and Protestant hanged Catholic, and when both Protestant and Papist killed other heretics, Shakespeare held the scales of justice firmly. He was by no means a bigot, his sympathies were too wide. Nor, on the other hand, was he ascetic. He delights in the joy of life, and devotes the highest effort of his rare genius to the public amusement. His name suggests happiness and emancipation to the hearts of men. Despite the pardonable assurance in the sonnets that his work would outlast the gilded monument of princes, he was cordial, gentle, kindly and modest. The commendatory verses in the first Folio show that his contemporaries esteemed him. Ben Jonson, indeed, said he loved the man "this side idolatry." And, although Shakespeare was himself a good actor, he modestly allowed Richard Burbage to play the "fat parts," contenting himself with lesser roles, such as "Polonius" or "the ghost" in "Hamlet." His was not the kind of greatness which says: "I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my mouth let no dog bark." He might have used of himself the words he puts in the mouth of the clown in "Twelfth Night." "I am one of those gentle ones that will use the devil himself with courtesy."

Only a humanitarian, as well as a rare poet, could have pictured the storm in those suggestive lines in "King Lear," the greatest of all tragedies:—

Mine enemy's dog,
Though he had bit me, should have stood that night
Against my fire.

Such a passage showed at once the humanity of the man. In "Titus Andronicus" he has some lines on the killing of a fly:—

But how, if that fly had a father and a mother,
How would he hang his slender gilded wings,
And buzz lamenting doings in the air?
Poor harmless fly!
That with his pretty buzzing melody
Came here to make us merry, and thou hast killed him.

How tender, too, are his lines on the wounded stag in "As You Like It":—

Come, shall we go and kill us venison,
And yet it irks me, the poor dappled fool—
Being native burghers of this desert city—
Should, in their own confines, with forked heads
Have their round haunches gored.

Shakespeare was unusually outspoken in the "Merchant of Venice." When Jewish people were treated as pariahs in all the Ghettos of Europe, it wanted some courage to make "Shylock" say before a Christian audience, in the rough and ready days of Queen Elizabeth:—

If a Jew wrong a Christian, what is his humility?
—revenge. If a Christian wrong a Jew what should his sufferance be by Christian example?—Why, revenge. The villainy you teach me I will execute; and it shall go hard but I will better the instruction.

Shakespeare was astute, too. Note that the humanistic plea for mercy is put in the mouth of "Portia," a woman. When Europe was a cockpit of contending creeds, and heresy was repressed by torture and death, Shakespeare makes "Portia" say:—

Ay, but I fear you speak upon the rack,
Where men enforced do speak anything.

Where else is there a similar protest in contemporary literature?

The quality of mercy is not strained;
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven,
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blessed;
It bleaseth him that gives and him that takes
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest.

Shakespeare was "hail fellow" with all sorts and conditions of people. Just as his "Hamlet" represents the highest intellectual power throughout Shakespeare's many plays, so "Jack Falstaff" stands as the representative of the world fleshly. "Falstaff" is the flesh, "Hamlet" the mind. We recognize in these characters the

Equipose of Nature, alternating
The too much and the two little.

Between these two extremes, how many full-length portraits has Shakespeare painted for our delight, "nothing extenuating, nor set down naught in malice." If Shakespeare had not been as good a mixer in society as Cervantes or Charles Dickens he could never have gained his complete knowledge of human nature. Dickens found many of his characters in the mean streets and the taverns, Shakespeare encountered his in the play-houses and inns, no less than in the society of the great and powerful. He might have echoed the words of his own "Prospero":—

In Nature's infinite book of secrecy
A little I can read.

This sensitive humanism was an integral part of Shakespeare's freethought outlook on life. He might well have asked himself whether the art of living was not better understood by people who had no religious quarrels because they had no religion. And whether an attitude of mind towards the riddle of existence less cocksure than that which prevailed among Catholics and Protestants and other religious people was not in effect more conducive to human comfort. After all, it is the natural wonder of a polished and humane mind, reflecting on our human troubles and the ultimate dust in which they finally lie quiet.

Through all the varied moods to which he gave such vivid expression an understanding humanism makes itself felt. It combines the unity born of a gentle nature, and the unity imposed by intellectual integrity. Shakespeare was not often deceived himself. He saw life steadily, and he saw it whole, with the perspective that only deep sympathy and a keen sense of humour can induce.

Let "Portia" speak for his tenderness, "Hamlet" for his intellectuality; "Timon" for his hospitality; and "Falstaff" for his humour.

This was the noblest Roman of them all:
His life was gentle; and the elements
So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
And say to all the world, "This was a man."

Burns pitied a mouse; other singers had fleeting moments of sympathy; but Shakespeare pitied the human race, and also animals.

Consider the essential humanity embodied in these lines from "The Tempest":—

O! I have suffered
With those that I saw suffer: a brave vessel,
Who had no doubt, some noble creatures in her,
Dashed all to pieces. O! the cry did knock
Against my very heart. Poor souls they perished
Had I been any god of power, I would
Have sunk the sea within the earth, or e'er
It should the good ship so have swallowed and
The fraughting souls within her.

Shakespeare is unique. No matter what writer we compare with him, he transcends their excellencies, surpasses them on their own ground, by reason of his opulent imagination, that vision which enables him to realize all phases of human feeling:—

When Learning's triumph o'er her barb'rous foes
First reared the stage, immortal Shakespeare rose,
Each change of many-coloured life he drew
Exhausted worlds, and then imagined new.
Existence saw him spurn her bounded reign
And panting Time toiled after him in vain.

MIMNERMUS

Peter Annet

A POEM

addressed to the

REVEREND MR. WHITEFIELD AND METHODISTS

occasioned by Reading his Sermon

preached at Bristol

on

2 COR. V. 17

THIS poem was originally part of Peter Annet's earliest pamphlet, "Judging for Ourselves or Free-thinking, the great duty of Religion, displayed in Two Lectures delivered at Plasterers' Hall by P.A., Minister of the Gospel," published 1739.

ELLA TWYNAM.

Regard, O! *Whitefield*, Preacher much admir'd!
For I divinely am by *Truth* inspir'd.
Nor less is mine, than is thy Pious Aim,
Error to vanquish, and the *Truth* proclaim.
By *Reason* only sacred *Truth* is known;
By this the *wrong*; by this the *right* is shown.
Authority, and Allegoric Sense
Cannot convince: *Proof* calls for *Evidence*.
If by our *Generation* we derive
All evil Seeds, and Sins provocative;
If by the *nat'ral Birth* Mankind are born
In *enmity to God*, and holds in scorn
Salvation profer'd by the Gospel Grace;
And are by *Nature* an abandon'd Race;
Thou very Reverend Man, the *Means* display,
That leads to this *regenerated* way;
How I may be refin'd, who'm foul throughout?
How may the heav'nly Work be brought about?
Can I beget myself, myself conceive?
Or have I Power to make myself believe
What does my Sense control, my Judgment pass?
Can I, my Nature change, and Good embrace,
Who am to Vice, to every Evil prone?
Can I my pleasing, ruling Lusts dethrone?
If that by Nature I abhor God's Laws,
Then what in me can plead my Maker's Cause?

Or how can I one step to Goodness move?
Or how procure the Holy Spirit's Love?
Can I the Object of God's Vengeance, please?
Can I the Tree of Life immortal seize?
My Will's deprav'd; I would not, if I could;
My Power is lost, I cannot if I would;
Nor can be passive, Nature prompts me on;
Nor more can stop, than can a falling Stone.
What Means can helpless, wretched Sinners take?
A Power invincible the Change must make!
For that alone can all Man's Powers control,
Renew his Nature, and convert his Soul.
Whoever then is damn'd, may well repine,
Lord I was passive, all the Power was thine;
What I was made, I was; if I was Evil,
Thy Will consigned me early to the Devil.
For what controls thy Power, or rules thy Will;
Or who can move what is immutable!

How vain, O! *Whitefield*, is your Preaching then!
In vain you threaten unregenerate Men:
In vain you warn them of Impending Woe:

For none have Power the Way you lead to go!
 Ah wretched Man! who can enough condole,
 The sure Damnation of each human Soul,
 Unless eternal Mercy save the whole!
 Extend free Grace, O *Whitefield*, to us all;
 Or quit the wretched Tale of *Adam's* fall:
 For what can mar what God pronounces good?
 Or how can he Omnipotence withstood?
 "But if like Glass we only soil'd appear,
 Then we by Nature not corrupted were.
 But vehicles of Light and Virtue are.
 "Or if like Gold are unrefin'd in Ore,
 What need we then our nat'ral State deplore?
 Refining Education will display,
 Th' intrinsic Virtues lodg'd in human Clay.

*But if we're not by Nature born in Sin,
 What need we after to be born ag'in.*

If to defend your Cause, you thus object,
 Hear me O! *Whitefield*, with no disrespect.
 If 'tis no Metaphor, why do you blame
 Great *Nicodemus*, and his Sense declaim?
 And if it be, How could that Ruler know,
 What Sense from that mysterious Phrase could flow?
 You understand it means a Work within,
 To combat Evil, and to conquer Sin.
 But had you not th' Expression heard before,
 Would you not said as much, or said much more?

Now by what *Power* this inward Work is wrought,
 Let us examine, by a serious Thought.

If th' Operations of the Spirit are,
 The Consequence of our assiduous Care,
 We must by Nature have such heav'nly Powers
 Whose Labour makes the Holy Spirit ours.
 He waits our Pleasure, while we his fulfil;
 When he has Power to mould us as he will:
 Yet he controls us not in doing ill.
 His Will submits to ours, tho' Sin he hates,
 Yet we Sin on, and he commiserates,
 Not interposes (tho' he means us well)
 To stop us in our full Career to Hell.
 And yet except he does, we're sure to go
 To unconceiv'd and everlasting Woe.
 If 'tis the Holy Ghost the work begins
 Why not perfect it, in each Soul that Sins?

If knowing Good, the Holy Spirit be,
 We've in ourselves the Power to be free;
 There we the Path to Happiness may find,
 By using right th' Endowments of the Mind.
 God's Work needs not his further mending Care;
 We make ourselves whatever 'tis we are.
 If early we begin good Seeds to plant,
 No power supernatural we want.
 But if regardless grow the rankest weeds,
 Men's own unhappiness are their ill Deeds.
 Whom Common Sense, nor civil Laws reclaim,
 God not converts by Wonder-working Fame.

If we from God proceed, God has impress'd
 The heav'nly Image in the human Breast.
 Altho' Obscurity may hide the Face
 Of Virtue's brightness in the human Race,
 What can contract th' extended Arms of Grace?
 What then remains, but that we should put forth
 Our inbred Powers, and shew our inbred Worth,
 To be re-born, espouse the glorious Cause
 Of Reason, Wisdom, Truth, and Nature's Laws,
 Pure Laws that from the purest Being came;
 And are like him eternally the same.
 Then let no dark Despair damp civil Mirth,
 But learn of Wisdom what's the second Birth.

Mankind is born in Ignorance at first,
 But when the Soul for Wisdom is a-thirst,
 It lives another Life, 'tis born ag'in,
 And sucks immortal Truths with raptures in.
 Damnation Doctrines give him no surprise;
 No horrid Hell, no Devil terrifies;
 No future fears his steady Soul annoy;
 He lives, and riots in excess of Joy.

FINIS

Correspondence

THE USE OF FORCE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—You head the letters relating to what one of your correspondents calls "the Simmons-Lindsay controversy," with the words *The War*. Whether this refers to a "scrap" between Mr. Lindsay and myself, or to an alleged Great War, I don't know, but to the ring which has seemingly formed round the expected combatants, I can only say I am sorry if they are deprived of a source of innocent merriment. I put up my dooks, but the champion of the "Party Line" was either too proud to fight (in the Wilsonian sense) or too clever a strategist to be butchered to make a Roman holiday. I don't blame him: he fired his shot and got away. After all, you don't hang up your body on the Siegfried Line for the fun of the thing.

But while picking up my jacket I would like to take just a few lines of your space (now costing, as you, Sir, point out elsewhere, about twice as much) to apologize to your two readers, Messrs. T. D. Smith and A. Sells, if I don't "take them on" as a kind of *ersatz* for Mr. Lindsay. I mean no disrespect to these gentlemen, and I agree with some of the things they write, but it was Mr. Lindsay's scalp I was after. Mr. Lindsay has so often constituted himself, as it were, the spokesman in Freethought circles of the British (and, presumably, also the Russian) Communists, enlightening our darkness, that for once I gave rein to the natural man's irritation at being "instructed." He is an able controversialist, and we can all learn from such, but his calm assumption that we *all* agreed with his dictum on the use of force was too much for me. But if I have been able once again to direct attention to the unreality of divorcing ideas from the human beings who generate and hold these ideas I have not wasted my time. I repeat: "There is no such thing as Communism or Fascism apart from the people who hold certain views on government and economics." Think it over readers.

BAYARD SIMMONS

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (*White Stone Pond, Hampstead*): 11.30. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. L. Ebury.
 WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (*Hyde Park*): 12 noon until 6 p.m. Various Speakers.

INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (*Cricketers' Arms, Inverness Street, near Camden Town Underground Station*): 7.30. Mr. T. Blanco White (National Council for Civil Liberties)—"The Abuse of the Official Secret Acts (and Contemporary Events)."
 SOUTH PLACE ETHICAL SOCIETY (*Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, W.C.1*): 11.0, John Katz, B.A.—"The Fate of Homo Sapiens."

COUNTRY

INDOOR

BERKENHEAD (*Wirral*) BRANCH N.S.S. (*Beechcroft Settlement, Whetstone Lane*): 7.0, Mr. Woods (Birkenhead)—"The Mystery of the Universe."
 EAST LANCASHIRE RATIONALIST ASSOCIATION (*28 Bridge Street, Burnley*): 2.30, Mr. J. Clayton. Questions and Discussion.
 GLASGOW SECULAR SOCIETY (*McLellan Galleries, Sauchiehall Street*): 7.0, Debate—"That Man's Free-will makes the God Hypothesis Unnecessary." *Affir.*: Mr. Frank Smithies (Edinburgh N.S.S.). *Neg.*: Mr. John Grant (Church of Scotland).
 HYDE (*Socialist Church*): 6.30, Mr. J. Clayton—"Word Magic."
 SCOUTSBOTTOM (*Labour Hall*): 7.30, Tuesday, December 5. Mr. J. Clayton.
 TEES-SIDE BRANCH N.S.S. (*Jubilee Hall, Stockton*): 7.30, Mr. H. Dalkin—"Paralyzed Minds."

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