

# THE FREETHINKER

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

**Views and Opinions**

**Blasphemy**

APROPOS of the curious blasphemy trial that is taking place in Jersey, about which we may have more to say later, Mr. Claude Golding contributes an article to the *Yorkshire Evening Post* for December 2, on the "Problem of Law of Blasphemy." Mr. Golding appears to have a casual acquaintance with the blasphemy laws as they stand, and shows no awareness of their nature or of their possible implications. I am not reproaching him for this. It has not been the business of Mr. Golding to become intimately acquainted with the significance of the laws against blasphemy, and it has been mine. But it would not be difficult for anyone to become acquainted with the nature of these survivals of primitive belief, or of the danger they may become to progressive thought. They are commonly thought of as concerning only those who are conducting a direct attack upon Christian belief. As a matter of fact the common law of blasphemy may become, so soon as conditions are promising, an instrument for attacking quite a number of reform movements.

Mr. Golding refers to the *Blasphemy Act* only, and his article shows that this is the only thing he has in view. The Act he has in mind is that of William III. c. III. Its full title is "An Act for the more effectual suppressing of Blasphemy and Profaneness." It is an Act that has never been enforced, although it has influenced legal decisions and also legislation. It was described by Lord Chief Justice Coleridge as "ferocious" and "infamous." Other liberal-minded judges and legalists have used similar language. The Act defeated its purpose by its ferocity. It provided that anyone who by writing, printing and advised speaking said there were more gods than one, or denied the Christian religion to be true, or the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be of divine authority, was to be deprived of office or employment, civil or military, and if guilty of a second offence could not sue in any court, receive a legacy, be entrusted with the guardianship of a

child, or be executor to a will. It practically outlawed an offender. Not quite so indecently brutal as Hitler's legislation, it might have served as a model for it—with developments.

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**Church Law**

Mr. Golding appears to think that "blasphemers" are prosecuted under this Act. That is not the case. All blasphemy prosecutions have taken place under the Common Law of blasphemy, and its presence there is due to certain decisions taken by the secular courts in the latter half of the seventeenth century. Until the Cromwellian Revolution blasphemy was a religious offence. It came under the cognizance of the Ecclesiastical Courts, which originally dealt with all offences of morals and religion. It was when these courts ceased to function that "Blasphemy" came into the ordinary courts. There was no decision of Parliament ordering this, it was a function taken over by the Judges on their own responsibility. In one of the earliest cases an eminent judge said that it was not to be presumed that because the Ecclesiastical Courts had ceased to function the ordinary courts were unable to deal with questions affecting religion and public morals. Later, towards the end of the century, one judge laid down the rule that attacks of Christianity were illegal because Christianity was part and parcel of the laws of England. What he meant by this no one has ever been able to discover. Christianity could only be called part of the laws of England inasmuch as most people believed in it, but English law, however much it has been influenced (for the worse), by Christianity, is not embodied in any Act, and even if it were there is nothing illegal in questioning or attacking any Act or institution from the institution of the monarchy downward. The ruling was unmitigated nonsense. Other judges, however, repeated the nonsense, and for many years that meaningless statement was often heard.

I will deal with the Common Law of Blasphemy later. For the moment I wish to deal with Mr. Golding's statement on the preservation of the law against Blasphemy. He says that "with good reason the Church of England has opposed abolition"—of the law. (So also have other Churches). The "good reason" appears to be that:—

If the laws were repealed the Communists would be tolerably safe in pursuing their anti-religious propaganda. There are many ancient laws still on the Statute Book which contain provisions obviously out of date, but it is not always wise to repeal them. Officialdom thinks it better to allow them to remain dormant, for one cannot say when such a weapon as an old decree may come in useful to stop seditious propaganda, or dangerous activities by any other Act.

The italics are mine, but for the sake of Mr. Golding's reputation one may hope that the opinion expressed

is due to thoughtlessness. The plea is unsound to the point of offensiveness.

Mr. Golding's apology for the retention of the blasphemy laws reminds me of a similar excuse offered by the Government to the same end. The last Bill for the abolition of the Blasphemy Laws, by a stroke of luck, actually reached the Committee stage. The Government was alarmed lest it should pass into law and the chief law officer of the Government informed the Committee that if the Blasphemy Laws were repealed, without another Act to take their place, there was no power left to prevent speakers using indecent or abusive language at street meetings. At some risk to myself I denounced that advice as due either to ignorance or deliberate lying. Bearing this incident in mind I would ask Mr. Golding what actual offence is there in the nature of indecent language, incitement to a breach of the peace, seditious speech, obstruction, etc., that may occur at a public meeting, or by way of publication that cannot be dealt with at ordinary law, and which may be dealt with under the law of blasphemy? I know of none. Does Mr. Golding know of any? If he does he should name them. If he does not he should withdraw his implied defence of purely religious favouritism and persecution.

Mr. Golding says the present Blasphemy Laws prevent anti-religious propaganda. Does Mr. Golding believe that anti-religious propaganda ought to be prevented by law? Or does he wish to suppress "Communist" anti-religious propaganda? But there is nothing illegal—at present—in the propaganda of Communism, even when allied to anti-religious propaganda. I am not a Communist, but I should be unworthy the name of Freethinker if I did not claim for Communists the right to proclaim their opinions that I would claim for a full-blooded Tory. There is no great virtue in anyone claiming a right for themselves. It is the claim for the same freedom for those with whom we do not agree that entitles one to freedom of speech. The social arena should not be one where permitted opinions only are heard. That kind of liberty exists in Germany in Russia, in Italy and in other places. And if the present war is worth fighting it must be, not merely to save people from the torture of the body, but to save them from the even worse torture of the mind. Mr. Golding owes it to his public to be a little more candid than he is. There is no middle course here. Opinion is either free or it is not; but you cannot have freedom of opinion if any opinion is denied a hearing.

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#### A Dangerous Law

Mr. Golding's statement that "Officialdom" thinks laws that are outworn ought to be retained so that they may be used to stop certain kinds of propaganda is significant. There is something in that plea, but it is a very bad and a very dangerous one. If the public agrees that certain things should be controlled or suppressed there could be no great difficulty in getting new laws to say so, plainly and distinctly. The fact that "Officialdom" wishes to keep these out-of-date Acts in being waiting for a chance to put them into operation during some retrogression in public opinion, or during some period of strain, is the best of all reasons for abolishing them while the public mind is relatively sane. In that very defence of Mr. Golding's lies the most cogent of reasons why these laws should not be retained to favour tyranny or obscurantism. In fact, Mr. Golding has here touched on a point, the importance of which I think he fails to see. I will deal with it later.

I urge Mr. Golding to consider what has been, and is still called "seditious" and "dangerous activities." This was a favourite term over a century ago

in favour of the Combination laws. It was used against the freedom of the press, the right of public meeting, the preaching of Radicalism and Socialism, the entrance of Jews and Catholics to Parliament, the enfranchisement of women, the policy of popular education, the secularization of Sunday, freedom of Sunday travel, there is not a reform on which we now pride ourselves that was not opposed by "Officialdom" as against the well-being of the country. Of course "Officialdom" wishes to retain these old laws. It abhors change. Officialdom knows that if many of these outworn laws are repealed there would be small chance of similar new ones being passed. So it says, let us keep these old laws in being, we cannot use them now as we would wish, but the day may come, and we shall have these ancient weapons to hand.

Mr. Golding is evidently in love with this excuse for Officialdom, for he apologizes for the maintenance of the Blasphemy Laws on the ground that very few prosecutions for blasphemy now take place. But this is because speech and publications that once sent men and women to prison are now written and spoken as a matter of course. The laws are not enforced as they once were, because people have won the right to "blaspheme." I have been doing it for over fifty years, and "Officialdom" has left me alone, and is likely to continue to do so. Bigotry has not become more tolerant, it simply lacks the opportunity to express itself. Less than two years ago Sir Samuel Hoare, as Home Secretary, publicly sympathized with the wish of some bigots to prohibit an International Freethought Congress. He also does not wish to see the Blasphemy Laws repealed.

Speaking of the case of Harry Boulter, prosecuted for blasphemy early in the present century, Mr. Golding says his was a case where "ancient laws may be used as a lever," because while the man was charged with blasphemy he was punished for being a nuisance." That is not true. I was concerned in Boulter's defence, and was in court during the whole of his trial. He was convicted of blasphemy and nothing else. The question of "nuisance" was never brought forward, nor could it be. The judge, a very strong Christian, could not have passed sentence on any other offence than that of blasphemy, and if being a nuisance had been the offence the National Secular Society would never have interfered. We have never claimed the right of Freethinkers to be a nuisance, and I daresay many may have been as great a nuisance as any man in "holy orders." We have asked only for level laws for all, without discrimination of party or sect.

But the question of whether a law is set in motion often or seldom has nothing to do with the matter. A law is not bad because a number are punished in its application, or whether it is only occasionally that a person suffers under its application. If laws are not often put in operation that is an excellent reason for wiping them out. It proves that such laws have small application to the times. It is worse still that Mr. Golding does not object to a man being arrested for one offence and punished for another that is not even mentioned. That, in practice, is not law, it is not justice, it is bigotry and vengefulness using the law as an excuse. It is the policy of a brute ready to utilize the law to gratify his own passions. I do not, of course, think that Mr. Golding means these things or sees these consequences. I am only pointing out the implications of his statements.

But curiously enough Mr. Golding has in this last plea, actually touched on the real operation of the Blasphemy Laws in modern times. They are the vehicle of bigotry, and mental cowardice. A Blasphemy Law is an instrument of vengeance against

those who cannot be met with reasoned argument. In these days a Blasphemy Law is not merely the weapon of a coward and a bigot, it is also an outworn law that may in certain eventualities be brought into use against, not merely anti-religious propaganda, but against a great many social reforms for which men and women are striving.

I will deal with this phase of the Blasphemy Laws next week.

CHAPMAN COHEN

## Annie Besant's Atheism

Rough work, iconoclasm, but the only way to get at truth.—O. W. Holmes.

ANNIE BESANT was one of the most gifted women ever associated with the Freethought Movement. The foremost woman orator of her generation, a clever writer, and no mean scholar, she also possessed personal charm. The combination proved irresistible, for she had every gift that a woman could need for the formidable task she had undertaken on behalf of human emancipation.

To understand the sacrifice that her task demanded we must remember that in the narrow and restricted Victorian days many people thought the spectacle of a woman speaking in public on such subjects as Atheism, Malthusianism, and Republicanism, was an outrage on public decency. With her name is ever associated that of Charles Bradlaugh, who stands almost alone as a Tribune of the People, and who was even considered by many thousands as a likely President of a probable British Republic. If Mrs. Besant sacrificed comfort, health, and everything that most women prize, he sacrificed, in his turn, the political ambition which must always remain one of the chief incentives in public life.

Of both of them it is true to say that they were ideal leaders in popularizing Freethought. For she gave the fire and righteous indignation without which the agitation could never have succeeded, and he the Parliamentary knowledge, and skill without which both the Tory and Liberal fanatics in the House of Commons could never have been overcome. Their great struggle and final triumph have a special significance to-day, for the cause for which they were fighting was the cause of Human Emancipation, and the claim they withstood was the claim which in so many differing forms has spread tyranny so far and so wide since the Great War. If the British people escape the fate of so many Continental peoples it will be due to the qualities of which they gave so noble an example.

Little is said in ordinary histories of this Titanic struggle, for until lately it was supposed that the movement was not respectable. Yet it was, in reality, one of the most important problems of this, or any other age. Indeed, future historians will have to give great significance to Freethought, for not only did it challenge a heavily endowed superstition, but it helped materially to alter habits of thought both in England and abroad. For that reason alone the Freethought Movement must, in the eyes of the historian of the future, overshadow all the other events of those tumultuous times. For, in the last analysis, Freethought simply means the liberation of the mind of man. Probably no cause ever drew to itself a greater wealth of eloquence, from the days of Charles Southwell to silver-tongued Lloyd. But the rare oratory of Annie Besant had a quality of its very own, as distinct from the rest as her personality was distinct. It was like the reverie of one who was tortured by all

the horrors and sorrows of the world, and spoke the language of prophecy. She not only traced the tragedy of existence to the mental slavery of men and women, but showed that the hope of humanity is in the dignity and power of Liberty.

Annie Besant was originally a Christian, not only an Anglo-Catholic, but a parson's wife, and she has told us how, in her husband's empty church, she taught herself the art of oratory, which, subsequently she used with such consummate mastery. Brought up amid the ease and comfort of a middle-class home, she never flinched at the call of duty. Matriculating at London University, she took the Bachelor of Science degree with honours. Her knowledge of languages was turned to capital account, and she translated Jules Soury's *Religion of Israel*, and *Jesus and the Gospels*, and also Ludwig Buchner's works.

Thrust into leadership by her rare talents, she was forced into journalism by the accident of her position, but even in the narrow way of propaganda, she, like Bradlaugh, found time to encourage genius. He, it will be remembered, introduced that shy genius, James Thomson, the author of *The City of Dreadful Night*, to the reading public, whilst she published Bernard Shaw's *Irrational Knot*, and other works, long before that brilliant writer had stormed the bastions of success and become a world-figure.

It is one of life's little ironies that, whereas Annie Besant has been so largely regarded by the public as a leader, she was, in reality, a disciple as much as any of the rank and file. She sat at the feet of Dr. Pusey, Dean Stanley, Charles Voysey, Moncure Conway, Thomas Scott, Charles Bradlaugh, Mdme Blavatsky, the Fabians, to mention a few names that can be recalled readily. After thus boxing the compass of theological belief, she was of sufficient importance to become Chairman of the Indian Congress.

It was a tribute to her unique personality. Her golden tongue won a hearing for many causes, but the fact emerges that her best and most enduring work was done for militant British Freethought. In estimating her truly remarkable career, this part of her life looms very largely and overshadows the smaller interests that succeeded one another too rapidly. Paradoxical as it may seem, this rare and gifted high-priestess of a fashionable superstition seems fated to leave no lasting vestige on her generation save that ever-memorable time when she gave fifteen years of her splendid powers at their full maturity to the cause of Secularism. Of all the many books that she has written, *My Path to Atheism*, is a solitary work of real excellence and sincerity, although the author's intellectual adventures are so curious as to demand attention from historian and scientist alike.

Annie Besant travelled much, but her greatest journey was from the time when, as a young girl, she started on her journey seeking for truth. That she missed her way, and succumbed to a spurious Orientalism, is but to say that she had the weakness of her sex. The Barque that carries man and his fortunes traverses an illimitable ocean where the winds are variable and the currents unknown. He can do little to direct its course, and the mists and storms that shroud the horizon hang as thick and low as when the long voyage began. It is only rare personalities that can envisage the goal beyond the tumult and the mists, and each must possess the unquenchable spirit of the pioneer, yearning with desire to seek a newer world, and whose purpose is, like old Ulysses:—

To sail beyond the sunset and the paths  
Of all the western stars, until I die.

MIMNEMUS

## Professor Julian Huxley on his Grandfather

PROFESSOR JULIAN HUXLEY was born in 1887, I in 1875. When I say, therefore, that I knew Thomas Henry Huxley, I do not deny the same privilege to his grandson, only that I had the advantage of twelve years in point of age. This is obviously important. When I remember, also, the published records of Huxley's debates with Wilberforce and Wace, to say little of the egregious exhibition made by Gladstone in the *Nineteenth Century*, and the stringent attitude of the Great Professor on the subject of so-called Revealed Religion, it comes as a shock to read his grandson asserting that the grandfather "was essentially and deeply religious," in his essay on the centenary of Thomas Huxley's birth, published, significantly enough, in *The Modern Churchman* (1925). Was this written, vulgarly speaking, with the tongue in the cheek?

I need not seek any further than the actual essay itself, with its quotations, for the solution to the puzzle, thus:—

With theology as a code of dogmas which are to be believed, or at any rate repeated, under penalty of present or future punishment, or as a storehouse of anaesthetics for those who find the pains of life too hard to bear, I have nothing to do; and in so far as it may be possible, I shall avoid the expression of any opinion as to the objective truth or falsehood of the systems of theological speculation of which I may find occasion to speak.

Professor Julian uses the words "religious" and "religion," but he is careful not to define them. When a series of articles were published, later on, in the *News-Chronicle*, on the subject of "What I Believe," he was equally hazy. Had he the tender susceptibilities of the readers of the *Modern Churchman* and the *News Chronicle* in mind? His grandfather would have had no such scruples.

We expect hazy thinking, and even more hazy language from Churchmen. They are the licensed utterers of nonsense. Thus, when a clergyman says he *believes* in God, and, in almost the same breath, says he *knows* that God exists, no one of his hearers seems to notice the incongruity, or, perhaps, thinks it worth while to point it out. Of course, if the utterance is from the pulpit, there is no answering back. That has been the privilege of pulpits, even since religion acquired power. That is why clergymen, as an almost general rule, prefer the pulpit to the platform.

It is a truism to say that, on religious matters, Thomas Henry Huxley was an Agnostic; he even coined the word himself. This means that on supernatural matters he took up the attitude of not knowing—and not caring, until some ecclesiastically-minded gentleman undertook to "prove" the case for the supernatural, when the rash debater, if he came into conflict with Huxley, soon met his Waterloo. Therefore, whatever Huxley may have been as a "religious" man, he was ever a fierce opponent to Christianity and its preposterous claims, and had he lived in the East, there is little doubt that he would have resisted, just as fiercely, the claims of Buddha, Brahma or Mahomet. Knowing this (and the fact is indisputable) what a salve it must have been to read that the redoubtable debater was really "one of us," under his skin, and at first hand, because of the blood-related testimony of his grandson!

Of course, Professor Julian Huxley believes none of this (his "religion" is not so elastic as that), but why did he write his essay for the *Modern Church-*

*man*, where, to say the least—and the kindest—it was certain to be misunderstood? What ammunition for the park ranters of the Christian Evidence Society! Or did Professor Julian write it purposely to be thus interpreted?

It was Herbert Spencer who said, in his reply to the criticisms of Professor Tait, that English was a coarse language, lacking in exactitude, and that to express abstruse thoughts it was necessary to use precise, if abstruse, terms. Even if the words "religion" and "religious" had this precise significance to a scientist (and this is more than doubtful) the association, rightly or wrongly, with the belief in Gods, and so-called "supernatural" rubbish, should have rendered them taboo to a scientific man—one concerned, in his profession, with the most painstaking clarity of expression. Take Professor Julian Huxley's own citation from his grandfather's works:—

I suppose that, so long as the human mind exists, it will not escape its deep-seated instinct to personify its intellectual conceptions. . . . It may be that the majority of mankind may find the practice of morality made easier by theological symbols. And unless these are converted from symbols into idols, I do not see that science has anything to say to the practice, except to give an occasional warning of its dangers. But when such symbols are dealt with as real existences, I think the highest duty which is laid on men of science is to show that these dogmatic idols have no greater value than the fabrications of men's hands, the stocks and stones, which they have replaced.

Here, after a short interval, follows an "explanation" by the grandson, which is merely confusing the issue:—

. . . How he (Huxley) would have reacted to the problem to-day with the *more conciliatory attitude of the Church*, with the new discipline of Comparative Religion at his elbow, and with the growth of the positivistic or naturalistic attitude towards the idea of God, is another question.

It seems to me all this boils down to something quite small, and quite precise. Professor Julian may be a Christian, a Religious Wobbler, or a so-called "scientific apologist," but that does not label his grandfather in like fashion. Blood is not potent to this degree—and retrospective. What is this "conciliatory attitude" of the Church, of which he makes so much? Churchmen do not argue, nowadays, as they have found out, by bitter experience, that scientific cudgels can hit very hard. Also—to our national shame—scientists can only make a living (and a poor one at that) by occupying chairs at Universities, and the Church has intensified its grip on such appointments. Thomas Henry Huxley would have found this out, to his cost, had he been born in the twentieth instead of the nineteenth century, in fact he did, on more than one occasion.

Where is the "conciliation" of the Church, which bases its existence (and a far fatter existence than science enjoys) on the proven fact of the existence of God? Does any churchman deny it, or profess, in public, to even doubt it? The liar does not atone for his lie until he acknowledges its falsity. It is begging the question to say that the man who claims to have seen a pink serpent a mile long, may be stating a truth, and that such a serpent may exist. The existence of such a serpent is not the point at issue. The lie was in the statement of the man who claimed to have seen it, and on no evidence at all.

Huxley was an Agnostic, in religion and in many other things. He demanded proof, with all the force at his command. He ignored, as a true Agnostic should, every claim unsupported by evidence. He

only turned his attention to religion, and the Christian religion in particular, not merely because it was based on statements utterly unsupported by evidence, but because he saw the great powers for evil and oppression in a rich institution like the Church of England. It could not be ignored, like the Pillars of Fire or the Latter Day Saints; it had to be fought, and he joined issue with all the force of his gigantic intellect and wonderful erudition. He was a conqueror. He had no need to call other intellects to his aid. He was a host in himself.

Huxley had a fierce contempt both for those "philosophers" who strove to prove the existence of God and for those who attempted to prove that God did not exist. Naturally, who can prove a negation? To the busy man of science, whose every day counted for so much in a limited span of life, one was as much a waste of time as the other. But he knew that the rôle of all religions, throughout the ages, had been to assume a knowledge of the unknown, often of the unknowable, and this practice being a necessary part of human history, had to be considered by the scientist.

Finally, what is religion divorced from dogma; in other words, what is the definition which Professor Julian Huxley may have had in mind when he stated that his grandfather was a religious man? I think he meant that ideals transcend reason, just because they are ideals, things to be believed in, but not to be criticized in the light of knowledge. If this be the definition, then, in that sense, and that one only, Thomas Henry Huxley was religious—for what that may be worth. The man without ideals is a clod. These ideals may range from the highest appreciation of beauty or morality, faith in a mistress, down to the promise of a heavy meal next week with plenty of beer or wine. Ideals are of all kinds, and of all qualities. They have one characteristic in common; they are only beliefs, not to be examined critically, or they cease to be beliefs. Our ideals can be summed up in the words of George Meredith: "He began to examine his idol, a process fatal to idols."

We are all religious, these days, but that is not to say, by any means, we are all Christians; simply that we live on hopes and aspirations; ideals, in short.

Yet Professor Julian does give us a definition, of sorts, of Huxley's "religion," tucked away in a few words, thus: "Huxley had his beliefs. . . . What were they, and to what extent were they religious in the full sense of the term? As I here already said, Truth and Morality were his sheet anchors."

Judging by this standard, how many Christians of the present day are really religious? What a boom-erang this must have been for the readers of the *Modern Churchman*. But perhaps they missed this paragraph. It was inconspicuous enough.

Professor Julian Huxley must know that the general meaning of the word "religion" implies the belief in a Deity. If, by the term "religious," as applied to the grandfather, the grandson meant something other than this, he should have defined his meaning with the greatest care—which he utterly failed to do, and, one cannot help thinking, with deliberate intent. Any one reading Thomas Henry Huxley's works, who can state that the Professor believed in a Deity must have a peculiar, almost an ecclesiastical, mind.

HERBERT CESCINSKY

#### DEATH

I KNOW not if it rains, my love,  
In the land where you do lie;  
And oh, so sound you sleep, my love,  
You know no more than I.

A. E. Housman

## Mental Emancipators of the Victorian Age

REVOLUTIONARY philosophy in its modern form was necessitated by the scientific researches and discoveries of many investigators. The momentous achievements of Newton and his contemporaries, preceded as these were, by the speculations and revelations of Copernicus, Galileo, Gilbert, Harvey and other splendid pioneers served to establish the reign of natural law. Although this truth was recognized by a few choice spirits only, it was destined to pronounce the sentence of death on the religious doctrine of divine interferences or miraculous interventions in the majestic order of Nature. This was most clearly appreciated by the French intellectuals, although Hume and other British thinkers, as well as Goethe with his kindred spirits in Germany shared in the mental emancipation of the time.

The Mosaic account of the earth's creation had already been reduced to an absurdity by the geological researches and conclusions of Charles Lyell, Hutton and other eminent inquirers when an anonymous volume the *Vestiges of Creation* appeared in 1844. This startling production aroused and held the interest and attention of a considerable section of the reading public. Its authorship was attributed to the Prince Consort, among others, but was really the work of Robert Chambers, the publisher, an untiring popularizer of useful knowledge, whose enterprising activity led to the production of Chambers' *Encyclopaedia*, an instructive work of reference periodically revised and brought up to date nearly a century later.

In the eighteenth century, Paley aspired to demonstrate God's relation to the world by comparing his handiwork with that of a watchmaker. For much as a timepiece needs a constructive designer, so does the Universe imply the existence of a divine Creator to set it in motion until the Day of Doom. But this crude mechanistic supposition, naturalists were unable to reconcile with the facts disclosed in the floral and faunal domains. Nor did the heavens themselves lend any observable support to Paley's hypothesis.

Newton assumed that the Supreme Artificer had created the solar system in a moment of time. But the celebrated mathematician and astronomer, the French Laplace, in 1799 propounded the nebular hypothesis in his *Celestial Mechanics*, a similar concept to that independently advanced by Kant and Swedenborg. Laplace's exposition, however, was far more scientifically detailed and systematic, and, as a leading authority, the late Sir George Darwin stated, despite all the minor modifications suggested by subsequent astronomical discovery some theory of nebular genesis appears indispensable to explain the origin of the present phase of the solar system, as well as the starry universe itself.

In any case, Laplace concluded that what is now our planetary system governed by the sun, has been evolved in the course of untold ages from a relatively homogeneous mass of gyrating gas. As the temperature of this fire mist fell with the dissipation of its radiant energy into space, its centre became condensed into a revolving sun, while its external parts were converted into rotating rings which condensed into planetary spheres each turning on its own axis and circling round the central luminary. All that has been or, for that matter, is to be, is interpreted in terms of natural causation, and when Napoleon inquired concerning the part played by the deity, Laplace is said to have replied: "Sire, I have no need for that hypothesis."

Contemporaneously the great and much misrepresented Lamarck suggested that modified forms of life arose as a result of novel requirements necessitated by changes in surrounding conditions, while organs become more powerful and effective by use, and are transmitted in a strengthened state to the next generation. Herbert Spencer, our great philosopher, as Darwin termed him, was an early exponent of the evolutionary evangel, who in his maiden essays foreshadowed the majestic scheme of universal development which he later presented in his *Synthetic Philosophy*. An advocate of the evolutionary principle prior to Charles Darwin and A. R. Wallace, Spencer's exposition lacked the aid of natural selection, but after the publication of the *Origin of Species* in 1859 he, with immense generalizing power, incorporated Darwin's principle in his *Principles of Biology* and other works.

Spencer, however, influenced in the first instance a select few only, while Darwin's *Origin* created an immense sensation both in Britain and abroad, and as the ensuing years proved, the work of the English naturalist became largely instrumental in revolutionizing the thought of the intellectual world. While perusing Malthus' *Essay on Population*, Darwin saw the far-reaching importance of the fact that plants and animals, including man, tend to multiply much faster than the means of subsistence, with the consequence that a struggle for existence becomes inevitable. Therefore those organisms best adapted to their habitat survive, while the weaker and less adapted go to the wall.

By means of the artificial selection of plants and animals varying in a manner serviceable to himself, man in the course of a few thousand years has produced innumerable cultivated plants, and domesticated and vastly improved animal organisms. One has only to reflect on the amazing results of the labours of Burbank in the vegetable domain, and those of Bakewell and others in the animal realm to realize this. Mother Nature, on the other hand, with unlimited time at her command has selected those floral and faunal species that responded most adequately to *their own advantage* in an ever mutable environment. Moreover, the testimony of the fossil record indicates, on the whole, a steadily increasing complexity and ampler range of life, especially after the evolution of birds and mammals from lower reptilian forms.

Evolution is now universally acknowledged by biologists, although wide differences of opinion are entertained concerning the factors of organic change. Darwin himself in the later editions of his *Origin* intimated that he had probably over-estimated the importance of natural selection. That variation constantly occurs is indisputable, but the causes of variation are still problematical. The neo-Darwinian school maintain the all-efficiency of the selective factor, but the neo-Lamarckian scientists contend that characters of a functional kind that have been acquired by use may, in certain cases be inherited. Disuse of organs, they hold, leads to atrophy, while constant and increasing functioning promotes their development.

Much as the clerical obscurantists persecuted Galileo, their successors on a minor scale assailed the pioneer geologists whose researches manifested the remote antiquity of the earth. So powerful was religious prejudice, that excavators who encountered indisputable evidences of man's remains with the bones of extinct animals in contiguity in caves, that they were afraid to make known their discoveries.

Naturally, Darwin's doctrine, which assumed the operation of physical causes in the living realm, was reviled and execrated by pious people. But scientific truth found doughty adherents and men such as Hux-

ley and Tyndall fought and won the battle in England, while Germany, at that time an intellectual centre, furnished ministers and interpreters of Nature such as Haeckel, Büchner, Karl Vogt and Oscar Schmidt.

With his brilliant Belfast address delivered in 1874, the eminent physicist, John Tyndall, created consternation in the theological camp, when he boldly affirmed his agreement with Lucretius, "chief poet by the Tiber side," when he said that "Nature is seen to do all things spontaneously of herself, without the intermeddling of the gods." Then Tyndall proceeds: "Believing as I do in the continuity of Nature I cannot stop where our microscopes cease to be of use. Here the vision of the mind authoritatively supplements the vision of the eye. By an intellectual necessity I cross the boundary of the experimental evidence, and discover in that Matter, which we in our ignorance of its latent powers, and notwithstanding our professed reverence for its Creator, have hitherto covered with opprobrium, the promise and the potency of all terrestrial life."

There were a few noble exceptions, but doubtless Wilberforce, Bishop of Oxford, represented the mass of the clergy, when he insolently and arrogantly asked Huxley whether his lineal descent from an ape was on his grandfather's or grandmother's side. This drew the withering retort from Huxley that he would rather have a simian ancestor than a man who employed his gifts to obscure the truth. This was in 1860, and two years later that pious periodical *The Witness* denounced the Darwinian theory as "unscriptural and most debasing . . . in blasphemous contradiction to Biblical narrative . . . the vilest and beastliest paradox ever invented in ancient or modern times."

Again, Keble contemptuously dismissed the then recently founded British Association for the Advancement of Science as "a hodge-podge of philosophers," and when in 1841 the Anti-Corn Law League convened an assembly of ministers, even the *Times* derided this gathering as a freakish drollery as absurd as the British Association.

The gifted mathematician and moral teacher, Kingdon Clifford, whose early death was so sad a blow to science and humanism, rendered splendid service while he lived. He rejoiced in his liberation from theology, and to him the Christian cult was a plague that had destroyed two civilizations. "From the dim dawn of history," he averred, "and from the inmost depth of every soul, the face of our father Man looks out upon us with the fire of eternal youth in his eyes and says, 'Before Jehovah was, I am.'"

Every mental, moral and physical phenomenon Clifford consistently ascribed to evolution. He was greatly influenced by the Spencerian philosophy, but his theory of mind stuff to which he attributed consciousness was distinctively original. Concepts of right and wrong have a purely natural genesis. "Right" proves advantageous to the primitive tribe, while "wrong" is detrimental to the community. Religious beliefs are based on illusion. Mankind has ever deluded itself with fictions and fables, and had far better devote its attention to realities, and thus derive inspiration and emotional satisfaction from a contemplation of the majestic phenomena of all-evolving Nature.

Buckle, Bagehot, Bain, Mill, Maudsley and Galton, all contributed towards the triumph of science in its struggle with the creeds, nor must the magnificent labours of the anthropologist Tylor, be forgotten.

T. F. PALMER

## Holiday in Holy Land

ONE of the things that I had determined to do in life was to visit Palestine—the scene of so many romantic and religious stories. A few years ago I went there: alone. I deeply enjoyed the visit, and I would recommend anyone to do as I did—go wandering about the country with plenty of money and plenty of time like the local Arab—except that one stays in the best hotels.

Getting there from Egypt, however, was the very devil. The railway was bad; the carriages as comfortable as a cattle truck. One travelled all night, bitten by sandflies and unable to sleep. But in the dawn I reached Jerusalem, and a building of extreme magnificence made me think of the restored Temple until I learned to my aesthetic disgust that it was an American Y.M.C.A.

If you like ancient cities, and if you have a sense of the past you will like Jerusalem as I did: at least you will like the Old City. A name like King David's Hotel is rather a shock. But the Wailing Wall of the old Temple, its picturesque mumblers with its Jews and Arabs kept apart by a British-built wall at right angles and a British sentry, is a sight worth seeing amongst countless others. There are the narrow Via Dolorosa, where Christ carried the cross and the Church of the Resurrection and the Mount of Olives and Gethsemane—all frequently described. But I searched for the Hill of Calvary in vain.

"A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho." So did I, following that illustrious example—but in a motor-car. No wonder he "fell among thieves." The journey lies through barren, desolate, rocky, mountainous country, and banditry was still to be expected, so I carried a sword-stick. Obviously the teller of the Parable of the Good Samaritan knew that road—and the Inn. There is only one Inn on the long road: it is not (yet!) called The Good Samaritan Hotel. Of course I visited that Inn for the day was sweltering. Inside were five Arabs, 500 melons, and 500,000,000 flies. Hastily I drank and fled.

On and on I drove following the precipitous track. The desolation seemed unending. In that dreary land only the hot blue sky above was attractive. No wonder men here turned to the sky and dreamed of God for what was there on earth for man? Nothing; nothing at all but rocks and dust and perhaps a ragged half-dead bush.

And then—suddenly in the far distance—one saw a glimpse of Paradise. A green oasis, an unbelievable contrast! As one sped on, the dry heat became humid and hotter, and one saw a new country as unlike the old as anything well could be. And there in the midst of the lovely refreshing green nestled one of the most attractive towns I have ever seen. It was Jericho. No wonder the ancient Israelites coveted that town. There everything grew: figs, oranges, and lemons and gorgeous palms. There were many tinkling fountains and charming little houses with gardens sleeping in the heat. I loved Jericho.

I went on. I reached the reputed site of Sodom and Gomorrah. Some vast volcanic eruption happened there undoubtedly: it is awesome even to-day, and little wonder that men spoke of the Wrath of God. But the Dead Sea is a glory to gaze upon: a perfect expanse of blue. Put one finger in it and lick the finger and you will almost be sick at once. A mouthful will almost kill you. The finest and largest emetic in the world! Bathe, and you float in the water! It is too strong—too saturated with bitumen and potash to swim in for long—but the shores are now a Bank Holiday resort, and Limited

Companies make great sums extracting potash or catering for week-end trippers from Tel-Aviv and other cities. Yes, indeed: from the wrath of God to a Bank Holiday amusement!

Then I retraced my route. I went to Cana in Galilee, and sure enough I found the water-pots—but no wine. A friendly Arab showed me how to drink from a water-pot while holding it away from one's face at arm's length. No mean feat! He was as good at it as I was bad at it. But in that heat the water was better than any local wine.

I lived nearly a week in the little village of Nazareth at the local hotel, very clean and comfortable, kept by Germans. In that village I saw a Carpenter's shop—but no one cared about it! There, too, is the immemorial well, and the village maidens still go there at dusk, to fetch their water, as doubtless the Virgin Mary did. Eagerly I watched their procession. Unfortunately for romance many of them had discarded the shapely water-pot carried on the head for petrol-tins and biscuit-tins. I was deeply disillusioned. There is a church over the reputed site and a convent or so about, but Nazareth, when I visited it, was little exploited or commercialized.

One place that greatly appealed to me was the Sea of Galilee, and I spent much time on its shores as Jesus Christ is said to have done. Understandably: it is a delectable spot. When I bathed in the lake many thousands of tiny fish came round my legs and arms, and swimming about I could well believe in the Miraculous Draught of Fishes. In that fertile and lovely valley one could understand the precept, "Take no thought for the morrow," for in that climate and weather one need not. There is abundance to be had with little labour. Another water I swam in was the River Jordan, near the borders of Palestine and Transjordan; very wild and solitary my bathing-place was.

At Bethlehem, I distinguished myself. Like everyone I visited the Church of the Nativity, to see "the exact spot" where Christ was born. Tourists were scarce, and would-be guides were so many that a regiment of scoundrels flung themselves upon me. Two villains were persistent, and as they refused to go away and jostled me at the very church-door, to intimidate them I drew my long Toledo blade from its stick-sheath. Horrified, they precipitately ran. But a Palestinian police-officer—equally horrified—rebuked me: "You are the first person to draw a weapon in the Holy Place since the Crusades," he declared, "and it is strictly forbidden to bring one here." How he knew I was the first I don't know. But I was highly flattered. The "Exact Spot" I will not describe: it is in the guide-books.

Palestine is a tiny country—about as big as Wales, I judged. But what contrasts in fertility and sterility, in beauty and ugliness, in ancient ruin and modern development. Rapid changes were taking place: in the main street of the new Jewish city Tel-Aviv the cost of land was as high as in Piccadilly. Still, however, one could see pictures direct from the old Family Bible, the yoked oxen plowing, the gaunt herdsman with his goatskin and crook and his flock of righteous sheep and wicked goats wandering about and so on. But modern commercialism was already changing "all that"; the motor-car, the telephone, the tractor, the newspaper, the *entrepreneur* were all busy making two dozen Jews grow where one Arab grew before.

However I went at exactly the right time. The feud between Jew and Arab was not so advanced that I could not wander wherever I would, unhindered, but sufficiently advanced to keep away the usual plague of religious pilgrims. One could foresee the prosperous future; enjoy the changing present; and muse upon many relics of the past destined soon to vanish

for ever. (The petrol and biscuit tins on the heads of Nazareth maidens were eloquent!). And what starry nights, what warm days, what evening coolness and tranquillity one enjoyed! There was plenty of good food and plenty of good accommodation to be had wherever one went, and as pilgrims were absent, charges were extremely reasonable. Yes: I went at the right time.

From which you will gather that I am prepared to recommend the Holy Land as a holiday-land with all the emphasis of a travel-agency selling tickets. Certainly it is superior to many of the much-advertised resorts from every point of view, and I can strongly recommend it to the irreligious. To religious folk it will no doubt recommend itself.

C. G. L. DU CANN

## Acid Drops

From the daily papers of December 7. Mr. Winston Churchill, speaking in the House of Commons of the German magnetic mines, described them as the lowest form of warfare, and equal to

The warfare of the I.R.A. leaving a bomb in the parcels office at the railway station.

Vice-Admiral Osborne (same date of papers), speaking in Paris to the Anglo-American Press Association:—

The Allies had mastered the magnetic mine, which was no novelty because during the last war they had a big field in the Dover Roads over which no submarine could pass without being blown up.

Vice-Admiral Osborne is the British Chief Censor. It looks as though someone ought to censor the censor. Anyway the distinction between magnetic and non-magnetic mines raises a distinction rather fine for our judgment to appreciate. Why not get down to the bottom fact that war is always a brutal and beastly thing, that even with unlimited concerts, or when the clear alternative is war or something worse than war, it still remains a demoralizing force. If we have the courage to face war in that spirit we may use war itself as a genuine aid to its practical abolition.

The *Church Times*, in a burst of righteous feeling, asks "What man in his senses can hope for tolerance and good will from Nazis," and then adds, probably feeling that it has exhausted its capacity for accuracy, "For these Christian virtues they have nothing but contemptuous derision." We think that even Goebbels could not beat this. "Tolerance" as a Christian virtue is something that not even Hitler would have thought of. Good will—provided one agrees with the Christian Church might pass. But the Christian virtue of *tolerance*! Goebbels ought to retire from the competition.

God, according to Principal Nathaniel Micklem, has a deuced queer way of exhibiting his criticism of the mankind He made (created, or evolved). It is not the case that a Mr. Hitler has behaved as we might expect a fiend to act. It is not that England alone has incurred the Divine tantrums. Poland, Czechoslovakia and the others who have suffered most have not been the only scoundrels. Says the Mansfield College Boss:—

The oecumenical Church of Christ must see this war, therefore, as a judgment upon a civilization in which we are all involved, and for which all nations must take responsibility. God is calling all nations, and not the Germans only to repent. . . .

We are in the dark as to where to find this OECUMENICAL organization, but it must inhabit a lunatic asylum if it can believe that "all nations" (including Albania and Abyssinia) have caused "this war." Is God quite so silly as His Principals and others imagine He is? Hitler's idiotic ravings sound almost sane beside such ideas about a deity deserving worship.

"Serving Soldier" has an article on "Religion and the Army" in the *Church Times*, which will not at all be relished by the majority of readers of that paper. The writer has not much opinion of the religion of most of the officers, "who are inclined to keep what may be called 'army religion' completely separated from any personal religion they may have." He adds:—

"I am a Pagan," a senior officer explained to me the other day, as he started for Church Parade. "I'm not much of a church-goer myself," remarked another, "but I must say I believe in Church Parade. It does the men good to smarten themselves up properly once a week, especially in these days when there is less 'spit and polish' than there used to be." This point of view is so common as to suggest—not quite accurately perhaps—that to many officers, "army religion" is not religion at all, but a kind of drill.

This is bad enough, but the writer goes on to say that "the individual padre may, and does, win esteem as a man, but there is not much real respect for his calling." Comment here seems superfluous.

Contrast all this with the statement of a B.B.C. observer invited by the army authorities to survey the work of army chaplains. This gentleman, a Mr. Montague, came to the conclusion that not only was the work of the chaplain appreciated, and there was no hostility towards religion, but also that the number of communicants had increased tremendously, "more so than it did last time." In fact, there are far too few chaplains for the enormous increase in the work of "ministering" to the troops. All we need add to these conflicting views is that for the majority of soldiers Church Parade is a very pleasant relief from fatigue duties, and we think that is the real explanation why it is not actively opposed by the rank and file. An hour in church for the nominal Christian is easily worth more than a day in a mess-tent, washing up countless plates and basins.

The befogged Cardinal Hinsley considers that the chief reason for the collapse of civilization is the attempt "to establish a complete moral black-out." To achieve this "moral black-out" the adversaries of his own pure religion, as part of their plan, made a "flanking attack" on the schools so as "to quench the fire of faith in Catholic homes by a flood of secularism." The result can be seen in the state of the world at the present time. It would all have been completely different if only everybody had seen "the Divine Infant lift his tiny hands to heaven"—or some other balderdash. No one can reasonably expect Cardinal Hinsley to follow quite in the footsteps of Newman, or even Manning; but surely some of his friends could gently advise him to stick to prayers, or laying on of hands. All the same we are glad to find he can recognize an enemy in Secularism. It is.

The Rev. Worledge, it appears, from a letter of his in the *Church Times*, has a special brand of God of his own. He is one of "those who are able to see God as He really is," and his particular God apparently turns His back upon all that His priests and Creeds and Bible have said in praise of the world as He made it. But Mr. Worledge doesn't mince his words of denunciation of the historic attitude of Christians towards the worst of social conditions:—

Surely no Christian worthy of the name can look out upon the Christian world to-day without at least suspecting that the Church, ever since she became a holder of large vested interests, has fostered and supported, rather than resisted, the social abuses on which these interests depend for the increment they yield. Is it not a sinister sign that in almost every country the Church is favoured by reactionary politicians, and looked upon as a useful ally?

We have put this question many times, without ever receiving a satisfactory answer. What is the use of talking about the value of Christianity, when all over the world when people are driven to revolt it is the Church that is selected as the enemy? And the bulk of men and women do not revolt unless conditions have become unbearable.

**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.

"COUSIN JACK."—Sorry we are unable to find room for your article championing the claims of Francis Bacon as the author of the Shakespearian plays. Something more to the point in our judgment would be if some literary detective would be able to show in some contemporary writer the specific qualities exhibited in the plays. That would, of course, imply a close study of the literature of the period, but it would be interesting to many such as ourselves, who have no strong opinions in either direction.

"OWD BOB."—We have no objection to anyone reprinting any of our own articles, but would like, when reprinted, suitable acknowledgment to be made whenever possible and advisable. There is another reason why British war aims should be made known in a definite way. This is for the benefit of our own people. If we continue without such a statement until the war is over we shall have the situation of 1918 repeated—the people so inflamed that a lasting peace will be made almost impossible, and politicians greatly afraid of running counter to popular feeling. We want a *peace*, not an armistice. Peace is the one thing most worth fighting for.

C. McCALL.—Received and shall appear.

C. F. BRIDGE.—We are quite prepared to run the risk. The man who cannot bear to read anything with which he disagrees is not likely to be a reader of the *Freethinker* for many weeks. At any rate we do not write merely to please.

C. L. RIDGWAY.—It is gratifying to have your opinion that our notes on current events influence far more than we are aware of. But we are afraid we cannot enlarge them so as to cover all phases of current life. Even if we had the capacity to do so, we have to bear in mind that the *Freethinker* exists for a specific purpose, and we try and limit our comments within the scope of that purpose. And, generally speaking, we fancy that we do represent the general standpoint of the vast majority of Freethinkers in this country.

J. MEERLOO.—Glad to know that your newsagent had sold all copies of the paper when you called last week. We hope it will lead to a larger order in future. Conditions are favourable to rousing interest in the *Freethinker*, and we hope our friends will make the most of the occasion.

C. M. AMOR.—We have given your letter to the N.S.S. Secretary, and he may be able to write you. Pleased you find so much to interest you in this journal.

C. COMPTON.—There have been several volumes of selections from Lucian, but no complete edition, in English, other than the one mentioned in our "Views and Opinions." We think that reviews, of *old* books, which are always new to many, would prove quite as interesting as reviews of new ones. And books that survive, by their very survival, bear *prima facie* evidence of their value.

J. W. BRAY.—Many thanks for subscription for a new reader; kind wishes are heartily reciprocated.

J. HENSHAW.—Your "friend," is just a very ordinary kind of a liar. We had the fullest possible confidence in G. W. Foote, and we believe he had the same confidence in us. We discussed together all matters connected with the movement, and during the last ten years of his life, private matters also. Complete confidence is the only condition on which two men can work together. Reticence creates a barrier that prevents useful co-operation.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL AND A. THORNHILL.—Letters will appear next week.

S. R. GAINES (Boston, U.S.A.).—Your letter appears to have been much delayed in the post. We are pleased to hear that you "get more from the *Freethinker* than you do from any like source." We do what we can to keep up the standard.

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. Roselli, 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.

## "Jubilee Freethinker Fund"

SINCE our last list of acknowledgments to this Fund the following subscriptions have been received: Chas. S. Knight (N. Rhodesia), £10; I. Newman (S. Africa), £3 10s.; Ishmaelite (6th sub.), 2s. 6d.; J. G. P. Ballachey, 5s.; Fred C. Holden (U.S.A.), £1 1s. 3d.; C. H. Drewry, £2 2s.; I. Yettram, 10s.; C. M. Amor, 1s.; E. Rose, 2s. 6d.; E. Horrocks, £5; W. D. S., £2.

## Sugar Plums

Owing to the Christmas holidays all notices intended for issue of the *Freethinker* dated December 31 must reach us not later than the first post on Thursday, December 21. And during the war period, which is expected to end within the next ten years, lecture notices and similar items should reach us by the Monday morning of each week to ensure insertion.

One correspondent has suggested that a good Christmas present to a non-subscriber to the *Freethinker*, but who is likely to become one, would be to send him a receipt for a year's subscription. Needless to say, we endorse the proposal.

We are pleased to be able to report that the large edition of Paine's *Age of Reason* is nearly sold out. This was the cheapest edition ever issued, and we imagine one of the largest, if not the largest one. We hope to reprint at the same price as before, fourpence, but that will depend upon circumstances. Fourpence for 250 well-printed pages in these days is a venture which depends upon the capacity and opportunity for losing money. But we are assured that no other work printed is so well calculated to play its part of leading those who are still believers in the Bible to reconsider their position. And probably no other work has done so much to bring men and women to Freethought. The Churches were not blind when they saw in Paine one of their greatest enemies.

Although we fixed a date for the closing of the "Jubilee Freethinker Fund," subscriptions are still coming along—some from abroad, from which sources one cannot fix a time limit, others from home circles, probably due to the habit—a very general one—of intending to send but postponing the sending. A further list of donations from these late subscribers will be found elsewhere in this issue. We never had the slightest doubt that what was needed would be forthcoming. The *Freethinker* has too many loyal friends for us to doubt that.

One of these subscribers, Mr. C. H. Drewry, sends a very interesting letter, and we are sure the following portion of it will interest our readers:—

I must have seen the first number of the *Freethinker*,

but I should not understand much about it as I was so very young. I have, however, distinct recollections of the Xmas numbers issued by Foote, from which I acquired my early knowledge of Celestial Topography, Ethnology, etc., impressions of which still linger, which proves your theory, of catching the child young, to be quite correct.

I must have heard your first lecture at Hull when I was a boy at school. I last saw you at the Trocadero, in September, 1938. I need not say any of those things that have been making you blush recently; all I can say, and no one can say more, is that the first number came to this house, and we still look forward to it eagerly each week.

Perhaps you will be interested to know that as a small boy I met Bradlaugh; I heard him speak, and have still a vivid recollection of his wonderful presence and oratory. I heard Foote, Charles Watts, Heaford, Sam Standing, A. B. Moss, and a host of others. I liked Charles Watts the best, who could wither up his opponent with such a smile. Foote seemed to me to be always bitter, perhaps that was because of what he had suffered. You will be interested to know that I was a personal friend of Capt. Munroe, and was connected with the Hull Branch when it was in its prime.

We have a very vivid recollection of Captain Munroe. It must be well over forty years that we first met him, a rather portly retired Sea Captain, well read, with shrewd views on men and the world, and whose habit it was, and had been for many years, to smoke cigars tinctured with opium. His tales of the sea and of peoples were interesting and illuminating, some of them well worth the telling if we had the space. It was, by the way, in Captain Munroe's company that we first saw the inside of a prison—as a visitor. Considering many of the customs then in vogue, our sympathy was with the prisoners. Nowadays, thanks mainly to Freethinkers, prisons are regarded less as places of punishment, and more as places where an attempt is made to release a citizen where only an ill-doer went in.

### Fate ♪

A BATTLEFIELD in blackened night,  
A rocket sheds its spangled light,  
Below, the earth supports the gore  
Of bloody corpse; but are we sure  
That all this galaxy of fright,  
Can rid the world of greed for might.

Below, bewildered, stands mere man,  
Alone, embittered, bereft of clan,  
Whose heart once knew the healthy lure  
Of sandy, scintillating shore,  
The freshness of a mountain breeze,  
And love reclining close his knees.

Amid the din of gun's dull, spate,  
He wondered; was it guiding fate,  
Which brought this atmosphere of hate,  
Into the sphere of worldly mind,  
That universal love of kind,  
Music, culture; things that blind.

Amid the murk, 'twixt mud and slime,  
His mind despaired to solve the crime,  
But no! there came a sudden gleam,  
He saw at once with conscience clean,  
That prodding bayonet could not cure  
A world sore-tainted as a sewer

Let chanting politicians yap,  
Let budding Hitlers yelp and snap,  
But if the common people care  
To mix their lot, in hope, and share  
Their longing with all foreign folk,  
Then they'll deliver master-stroke  
To war.

W. F. WHITEHOUSE

### "In Spite of Gestapo"

LISTENING recently at nine o'clock round about 30 metres, I was surprised to hear broadcast the texts of the leaflet dropped inside Germany by the R.A.F.

The speaker, who announced himself as belonging to the German Peoples Freedom Front Radio, punctuated and enlivened the reading with pertinent comments from the German point of view. He asked the English—"our English friends"—not to lecture the democratic underground opposition inside Germany. Sharp, pointed, powerful exhortations, promising that the English were out for no second Versailles Treaty, were what was wanted, he said.

Despite oscillation and other interference, he went on clearly and determinedly to tell the truth about the German-Polish War. Germans of all classes, of all beliefs, were opposed to it, and many actively as well.

"Closest co-operation between the Polish and German peoples to bring peace!"

"All must conduct joint whispering-campaign slogans: in the factories, in the streets, in the shops and offices—everywhere—to slow down and obstruct Hitler's war machine," he urged.

"Long live the Peace Front of the Socialist Soviet Union with all the peoples of the world!"

He then described the bewilderment of the Nazi S.S. men, when told by German officers of the Russian-German Non-Aggression Pact: of the setback it gave to Hitler's political ambitions, and the terrific demoralization and isolation it had produced amongst the Nazis: which perforce, had to be diverted into war fever.

He gave a list of German Army and Air Force desertions, an account of Polish guerilla tactics and their destruction of German mechanized units, and news from the German home front—the shortage of meat, the duplication and distribution of the R.A.F. leaflet, the latest illegal literature, including the Catholic leaflet, which expressed Catholics' horror at the destruction of "the holy shrine of Czestochawa in Poland."

Twenty minutes later, he announced himself again as the spokesman of the German Peoples Freedom Front, an all-party anti-Nazi organization, which is seeking to build a securely realized democratic Republic.

It controls the illegal radio through the Committee of the German Opposition, which is representative of all types and shades of anti-Fascist and democratic opinion, and allows free expression of all such views.

In conclusion, the speaker quoted the words of Heinrich Mann, famous German novelist, Chairman of the Committee of the German Opposition.

"The German Opposition is the real Germany. The Committee of the Opposition is in constant touch with the forces inside the country.

"The Committee, which among other things, controls the now world famous Freedom Radio Transmitter, is independent. It does not serve the interest of any political group in preference to that of others.

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"The Committee will be glad to receive suggestions or to give any information desired. We are anxious to ensure the collaboration of our friends in England. We support in advance any proposal for joint action they may be good enough to make."

I recommend the transmitter to radio amateurs. It is a thorough, acute and valuable commentator on

the deceits, evasions and tricks of Government propaganda machines; in fact, it is the only free, non-Government controlled radio station in Europe.

For listeners I may say that reception is best where at night local stations are weak or silent; so subsequent experience has shown. The broadcasts usually last an hour, fading out at ten o'clock with a farewell, "You will hear from us to-morrow night in spite of Gestapo!" adding sometimes:—

"The Opposition has always held the view that the liberation of our people cannot come from outside (by means of war), but must be the result of the struggle of the masses of the people. Social Democrats and Communists place their hopes neither in the bayonets of Chamberlain and Daladier, nor in the Liberal wing of the German Capitalists, but solely in the united power of the people, the solidarity and fight of the international working class, and the aid of the great and powerful Soviet Union."

L. H. BORRILL

## A Leicester Flashback

It is forty years since the late F. J. Gould wrote his interesting *History of the Leicester Secular Society*, and a great deal has happened both to the Society and to the Secular Movement in the intervening years. Leicester itself, as Gould pointed out, "has always been distinguished by its self-reliant and progressive spirit," and perhaps even its citizens in these days would be surprised if they knew how greatly that progressive spirit has been acknowledged by the citizens of other towns in this land of ours.

For my own part, I have always felt that Leicester stands supremely out as the only provincial town in England which has a Secular Hall of its own, and which has managed, in spite of those great difficulties well known to the organizers of Freethought, to keep going with an attractive series of lectures and other secular and social activities. Other towns have worked under great difficulties and have managed to keep the flag flying; but Leicester can always proudly point to its own hall. Even those people in the town who violently oppose Freethought must acknowledge that the presence of an earnest and active body of men and women with no thought whatever of personal aggrandisement and working for progress and reform, is a tremendous asset to the citizens as a whole. I have an idea that in a way they are even proud of the Leicester Secular Society and its work.

Gould pointed out that as far back as 1785, the "freer spirits" of the town established a Revolutionary Club; and a little later Richard Phillips, who sold democratic literature near Humberstone Gate, was imprisoned for eighteen months for selling such books and the works of Thomas Paine. Chartism, and the Socialism of Robert Owen later still, appealed to many brave spirits in Leicester especially after visits from Owen himself. Owen left behind him "Social Missionaries" among whom was George Jacob Holyoake whose journal, *The Reasoner* "was eagerly read from week to week." George Bown and Thomas Cooper also had large Chartist followings.

The first notice of the Leicester Secular Society will be found in the *Reasoner* for April 6, 1853, though its "emergence" as such seems rather a mystery. But Freethinkers about this time certainly met at the house of Mr. W. H. Holyoake, who in addition sold general and Freethought literature. Later in 1861 the Society was properly inaugurated, and it is good to record that "one of the first proceedings of the Society was to celebrate Paine's birthday."

Enthusiasm waxed and waned, but once again, in 1867, valiant efforts were made to carry on the work—

since when it must be added "there has been no break in the continuity of the Society." In 1869, the Leicester Secular Institute and Club of 43 Humberstone Gate was founded, and its activities included the burning question of education as well as of temperance. In addition, some of the more prominent workers became better known, in particular, that fine old Freethinker, whose name can never be forgotten in the annals of Leicester Freethought, Josiah Gimson. It was he who suggested the founding of a "place of our own." The suggestion was taken up enthusiastically on November 18, 1872, a Company was formed in 1873, and a plot of land at a cost of £4,500 was purchased.

Eighteen seventy-three was certainly a red letter day for the Society, as Charles Watts and Gimson both had debates, and Holyoake gave his well-turned addresses, while the Society issued "a summary of principles and rules."

During the next few years, G. W. Foote and Harriet Law lectured for the Society, Bradlaugh held his famous debate with the Christadelphian, Robert Roberts, in Leicester, and many other well-known speakers—like J. Allanson Picton, the Rev. J. Page Hopps, and George Sexton—made the town a centre of controversy.

At last in March 6, 1881, the new Leicester Secular Hall was opened, and among the company present were Mrs. Law, Mrs. Besant, Mr. and Mrs. Theodore Wright, Josiah Gimson, Charles Bradlaugh, G. J. Holyoake, James Thomson ("B.V.") and many other local celebrities. It must have been a proud moment for all concerned, and a distinct triumph for Freethought in general, and for the great spirit of reform in Leicester, in particular.

In 1883 occurred the death of Josiah Gimson—a great loss to the town as well as to the cause he had so much to heart. He left £1,000 to the Society, and it is interesting to note that in an appeal for additional funds later Prof. Huxley sent a donation.

The list of lecturers who appeared on the platform up to the beginning of this century is an imposing one, and testifies also to a broad toleration of all views as a number of clergymen also occupied the platform. This is as it should be. We ought never to be afraid of the strongest opposition.

Classes were also held during the evenings though they were often allowed to lapse. An excellent library was formed, and there are other interesting amenities in the Society's social activities and work.

It was in 1884 that Josiah Gimson's son Sidney became the Secretary, and in 1888 he was elected President. From then till his recent death the name of Gimson was inseparably connected with Leicester Freethought—and for that matter with Secularism in general. It was a particularly happy thought on his part when, at the age of 70, he decided to put down for future posterity some of his *Random Recollections* as he called them, and the two volumes, albeit not published, are before me as I write.

Brought up by his mother as a Unitarian he used to argue with his father on the existence of God and a future life, and feel that he always had the best of the discussions. But, later, doubts began to grow upon him, though it was not till after his father's death that he became a member of the Society. Sydney Gimson's recollections of the various parsons whom he met, or who came to the Secular Hall are very interesting. (In passing, here is what he says about Dr. Stubbs, the Dean of Ely, later Bishop of Truro: "He once lectured to us on the 'Religion of Shakespeare,' and was frank enough to say that he could find no evidence in the plays that Shakespeare had any religion except the 'Religion of Humanity.'")

About G. J. Holyoake whom he met frequently, he

says: "Though I well liked and greatly admired Mr. Holyoake and saw his great ability, I could not always agree with him, and I felt that he was somewhat inclined to rejoice too soon at friendly approaches of the Great Ones of the earth, and to see breadth of mind where I could only see condescension or calculation." Foote "delivered fine fighting lectures which always had a dignified literary form. He had a deep musical voice, and delighted in reciting bits of Shakespeare or reading treasured passages from the poets." Charles Watts' lectures "generally contained several perorations"; while Joseph Symes "seemed surprisingly violent for a man who had been a Methodist minister and who had a lovable personality."

In 1885, Charles Bradlaugh was engaged to lecture, but as the Hall could seat only 600, another was taken and 3,000 people crammed in to hear the man who, with the exception of Gladstone, could draw the biggest audience in England.

Mr. Gimson was a strong Individualist, and it is worth again recording that the Secular Hall decided "in pursuance of a free platform to hear the best that could be said for Socialism." He thought that a lecture by H. M. Hyndman "was neither convincing nor persuasive." But he did not have such a happy time trying to demolish George Bernard Shaw. That redoubtable debater "literally wiped the floor with me," he dolefully says. It is interesting to note that the "two most delightful men whose views and friendship" influenced Gimson all his life were William Morris the Socialist, and Auberon Herbert the Individualist. He thought very highly also of J. H. Levy ("D" of the *National Reformer*) and Wordsworth Donisthorpe.

There is a curious mistake with regard to Dr. C. R. Drysdale, who is rightly mentioned as an active advocate of Birth Control, but quite wrongly as a sturdy anti-vaccinator. Dr. Drysdale was very much indeed in favour of vaccination.

Gimson's sketches of such personalities as Lord (then plain Harry) Snell, Mrs. Besant, Eleanor Marx Aveling, Mary Kingsley, Joseph McCabe, F. J. Gould, A. B. Moss, and many others, form an intensely interesting collection; and most people will agree with his remarks on Chapman Cohen, of whose friendship he was so proud. Among other things the Editor of this paper "has a wonderful power of clear thinking combined with the gift of putting his arguments in simple and convincing language." And by the way—one must note Shaw's opinion of his wife (of whom very little is ever said anywhere): "She is a much more ferocious and militant Secularist than I am." Needless to say that encyclopedic figure, John M. Robertson, looms largely in Gimson's recollections; but as that veteran looked back over his fifty year's connexion with Freethought, he tells us that he was astonished at the number of famous people he had met, and with whom he had discussed so many burning questions of the day.

The Leicester Secular Society has had its share, perhaps unconsciously, in moulding public opinion in its own city. It owes a great deal to the unselfish devotion of many of its members, whose names may mean nothing to Freethinkers of other towns and countries, but whose untiring work in the "greatest of Causes" (as I believe Meredith called it) has helped to keep burning the ardent and active spirit of Freethought.

If I have said nothing about the Society's work in organizing music and drama (the latter under the enthusiastic zeal of Harry Hassell) it is because space forbids. One can only fervently hope that some of our younger Freethinkers in other towns will do something one day in keen emulation of the work of the Leicester Secular Society.

H. CUTNER

## Some Proposals and Opinions

THOUGH Eugenics could now be made practical politics it is most important to inquire into motive. When science is misapplied it is usually the scientist who gets the blame among unthinking people. As Aldous Huxley remarks, "We are suffering from a little science badly applied. The remedy is a lot of science well applied."

But it should be applied by the humanist, not by the economist. That is, the motives behind eugenic practice should be satisfactory. "The humanist," continued Huxley, "would see in eugenics an instrument for giving an ever-widening circle of men and women those heritable qualities of mind and body which are, by his highest standards, the most desirable. But what of the economist ruler? Would he necessarily be anxious to improve the race? By no means. He might actually wish to deteriorate it. His ideal, we must remember, is not the perfect human being, but the perfect mass producer and mass consumer," and perhaps in some machine age "the majority of jobs can be better performed by stupid people." These are also the easiest to govern, being the least inclined to question the wisdom of their superiors. And so there would evolve a society of stable and docile stupids, easily managed by their idle exploiters, a caste apart, a caste of intelligent and expert administrators. The gap between the two classes would be wider even than that between the Patricians and Plebs.

Imperialism offers another instance where the power could be used for dysgenic ends.

Aldous Huxley "foresees the rapid deterioration, unless we take remedial measures, of the whole West European stock" (*Science in the Changing World*) and this is also the view (*ibid*) of Prof. J. R. Baker (Oxford). He agrees that a measure of negative eugenics, sterilization, could be enforced immediately: reproduction of mental deficiency he regards as "sheer madness." "Actually they are increasing in number in this country at a frightening rate. Unless something is done about it we shall before very long find ourselves in grave danger, as they are among the most fertile people, while the more desirable stocks are failing to reproduce themselves."

There is no question of snobbishness, he declares, and the measures are perfectly humane. The Eugenicist wants the "inherently best people, from whatever class, to be given a chance of showing their desirable qualities." The situation is tragic where the genetically desirable members of a community cannot afford a family and are taxed for the upkeep of fruitful defectives.

Inge manages to base his advocacy of Eugenics on the Bible: Eugenics "is a religion and its name is Christianity. The Gospels contain the most uncompromising eugenic utterances. 'Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?' 'A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.' 'Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.'"

Needless to say many of Inge's equally God-chosen colleagues will have quite different interpretations of these Biblical utterances. And the bitter opposition to eugenics on the part of the Roman Catholic Church shows that the motives of the anti-Eugenicist can also be open to suspicion. It is safe to assume that a fairly thorough application of eugenics would seriously damage Catholicism. Perhaps it is not far from the truth to say that Eugenics offers the greatest practical opposition to Catholicism, and, in a lesser degree, to all religion.

Eugenics, in this light, can be regarded as a physic which may purge human civilization of its poisonous growths.

It can also be a diet; its scope is not merely a negative lessening of the population. Birth-promotion is as important as birth-control.

How the practice is to be effected raises many problems. Inge, for instance, favours downright compulsion, which he defends rather ingeniously by saying, "If each is to count for one, the unborn majority are not here to plead their case." Not only, therefore, does he grant rights to the unborn, but he anticipates what they would say if they were here! What they would say, however, depends on who they would be, and it is precisely who they are going to be that is in dispute.

In spite of his unorthodox views Inge remains something of a mystic-ascetic, and he opposes sterilization "because it would lead to promiscuity." But since he has also said that the vast bulk of men do not *want* to be promiscuous his argument loses some effect. And in any case, since the price of promiscuous intercourse is the price of a cheap contraceptive, the monetary sacrifice being the cost of about half a packet of Woodbines, it is difficult to see how sterilization can lead to a wholesale rise in promiscuity.

The methods proposed by Inge (*Christian Ethics*, etc.) are absurd in comparison to harmless sterilization. He would restrict free education to the first three! This is a direct blow to the principle of equal opportunity, and for arbitrary clumsiness would be hard to surpass. Inge appears to go round with a chopper looking for scalps: arson, rape, political assassins—prepare the lethal chamber, for "they have been officially pronounced to be thoroughly bad citizens and they may be removed by the same right which a gardener has to pull up weeds," this to be done "without unnecessary humiliation or publicity," or in other words with all the formal politeness of an English Conservative gentleman devoid of a sense of humour.

We can do little with weeds, granted, but human beings are not weeds, and Haldane prefers to see what the public institution can do. Segregation would prevent the genetically defective from propagating their kind. He deplores that there are 300,000 M.D.'s at large in England and Wales who could be segregated in institutions for no more than the cost of another 100,000 unemployed, and there would be the same biological advantages as from sterilization.

Some eugenists, however, would object that there is no point in segregating the *carriers* of a defect, not themselves defective, owing to the gene being recessive, and it is these carriers who should be sterilized. Haldane deplores that this would cut off the supply of perhaps ten times the number of normal offspring. He proposes (1) to discourage or (2) forbid, certain marriages, or (3) dissolve them, (4) to encourage continence or (5) birth-control, and (6) persuasive or (7) voluntary, sterilization. The latter is at present dangerous to women to the extent of a one per cent mortality rate. Compulsory sterilization, he thinks, would be the symbol of a not admirable mentality on the part of those who make such a law.

Haldane apparently considers this last observation carries its own justification, for he makes no attempt to substantiate it.

He advises, too, that cousin-marriages are risky. Curiously, the Roman Catholic Church is the only organization opposing them, but it is doubtless possible to get a dispensation.

MacBride's proposal is to sterilize those who apply for public assistance when they over-produce, while as a positive eugenic measure Muller suggests

entelogenesis, (the artificial insemination of a woman by a particularly gifted father whom she need never see). Fisher proposes family allowances to enable the genetically superior to have children.

Acknowledging that Eugenics is the only known way of improving the innate characters of a people, Haldane yet fears that it may be used for the purposes of class legislation, giving a new kind of hereditary principle to follow the obsolete ones of noble blood and divine right. Lunacy, idiocy and mental defect are not confined to any one class, but the rich can afford to keep their affected members at home, so that the sterilization of *certified* mental defectives becomes a class measure.

As another class danger Haldane mentions a case from Ontario in which, during a prolonged period of unemployment an employer offered to pay for the sterilization of his employees, some of them consenting.

Hogben's views are almost identical with those of Haldane, to whom he dedicates a book. He sees a political motive behind the proposal to educate only the children who pass certain intelligence tests, since it cannot "apply to the prosperous classes," who would be in a position to pay for what was lost. Hogben proposes to breed out defects only when they cannot respond to treatment or, as with simple primary amentia, it is yet impossible to provide an environment which would preclude their manifestation.

G. H. TAYLOR

(To be concluded)

## Correspondence

"JESUS" AND "GENTILES"

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—A veteran warrior from afar, who reads the *Freethinker*, and has spent his leisure hours in the study of Latin, writes to ask me if I can explain how it comes to pass that Jesus is so often reported to have used the word *Gentiles* in a sense unknown to Latin literature at his day. As the same query may have occurred to other readers of the *Freethinker*, it seems better (with the permission of the Editor), for me to answer my querist therein rather than through the post.

Dr. E. A. Andrews in his *Latin-English Lexicon* [London, 1859 (1663 pages)] devotes one and a half columns to the word *gens*. He gives *clan* as the first signification and, among other senses, he puts *race, nation, population*, as perfectly classical. Near the end he says that the plural *gentes* (post-Aug and rare) was employed to distinguish "foreign nations and foreigners" from "the Romans"; and that the ecclesiastical fathers used it to signify "Pagan nations and heathens," as contrasted with "Jews and Christians."

*The Interlinear Bible* [Authorized and Revised Versions] Cambridge, 1907, says in the Revisers' Preface to the Old Testament:—

The Hebrew word *goyim* "nations," which is applied to the nations of Canaan dispossessed by the Hebrews, and then also to the surrounding nations among whom the people of Israel were afterwards dispersed, acquired in later times a moral significance, which is represented by the rendering "heathen," or Gentiles (xv.).

In their rendering of the New Testament, the makers of our authorized translation borrowed the term "Gentiles" from the Latin Version called the Vulgate, where it represents the Greek phrase *ta ethne*, which means literally "the nations," whilst the revisers of that translation have accepted "Gentiles" as a conventional expression for all those who are not of Jewish blood. The original phrase *ta ethne* as used in the New Testament signifies the contrast which the Jews drew between themselves and the other nations on the ground of their belief that they alone worshipped the one living and true God. The *locus classicus* is *Luke ii. 32*, where the aged

Simcon, addressing God, refers to the Christchild in his arms as :

A light to lighten the Gentiles,  
And the glory of his people Israel. (A.V.)

Here the genitives *ethnon* and *laou Israel* clearly express the distinction between the other nations and God's people Israel. The conclusion of the whole matter appears to be, that, although the word "Gentiles" was not employed in the New Testament sense at the time of Jesus, yet, nevertheless, it represents conventionally a phrase then in use among the Greek-speaking Jews, who no doubt got the original thereof either from their ancient literature or from its exposition in the national tongue used by them at the period here concerned.

C. CLAYTON DOVE

#### MEASURE FOR MEASURE

SIR,—Under cover of a voluminous smoke screen, Mr. Cutner opens his act with that evergreen trick of the tinselled debater—his opponents have lost their tempers. Presumptuous persons differing from Mr. Cutner, are regarded by him as very little removed from the congenital idiot. It reaches its climax when he invokes the ghost of Robertson to beseech God to erect a barrier against his half-witted critics. One critic had the temerity to recommend certain books. Carrying coals to Newcastle with a vengeance this was. What few of the world's books—if any—Mr. Cutner hasn't read are covered by other books about them, and publishers lists in his library.

Mr. Cutner raises a dust and a clatter about insignificances to cover his evasion of the main points. He stated that the plays of Shakespeare were not written by Shakespeare, because he wasn't an aristocrat to his fingertips, thoroughly versed in Court procedure and the law. The Court ceremony I still emphasize is romantic, theatrical, and probably much unlike the real thing. Plays about Kings, Court and State were the fashion in the Elizabethan period. Indeed, "Arden of Feversham," a domestic tragedy suspected of traces of Shakespeare's hand, is regarded as a revolt against court plays. As for the law, a gifted "snapper-up of unconsidered trifles" who had to cater for the entertainment of the people would easily turn his visits to the courts of justice, to dramatic and commercial account.

Mr. Cutner should study stage-craft. He then might understand why so many eminent poets failed as dramatists in the theatre; and why Shakespeare, a poet, who knew the theatre through and through, succeeded. He will be better equipped, however, to pay no attention to it while training for his attempted knock-out of the Stratford man: not necessarily in the *Freethinker*.

One word about the fuss kicked up about the chronology of Oxford and Shakespeare, based on a passing observation of mine. Mr. Cutner mistakes a minnow for a tunny fish. Shakespeare had "arrived" as a play wright and poet before Oxford was forty years of age. It would be more to the point for our formidable iconoclast to devote himself to squaring Oxford's legitimate works with those he would have us believe Oxford fathered on Shakespeare.

If he persist in giving a loose rein to his incipient fancy that Oxford wrote the plays, he will bump against a real chronological hurdle. The later plays were written after Oxford's death.

H. IRVING

[Owing to our limited space we have had to curtail Mr. Irving's letter, but we do not think we have eliminated anything vital. We hope writers of other letters on any subject will take the hint.—Ed.]

#### After Canning

IN matters of warfare, the fault of the Church  
Is leaving, not God but mankind, in the lurch;  
In praying to win and not winning to pray  
The men who cry "Havoc" and throw lives away;  
In not saying boldly that war is an evil  
Begotten in hell of its father the devil.

C. G. I. DU CANN

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