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

Views and Opinions

(Concluded from p. 803)

More about Blasphemy

QUITE normally the Common Law of Blasphemy is taken, by even the majority of Freethinkers, as affecting only those who are engaged in attacking Christian beliefs. But the Common Law of Blasphemy contains elements that, given a retrogression in public opinion, a thing that no longer looks so improbable as it did to the people of two generations ago, there are few phases of advanced thought that might not be threatened by it. The ideal of individual liberty, for the time being, I believe, is less imperative than it was.

Properly to appreciate the situation one must get back to the origin of blasphemy. Obviously it is primarily a religious offence. It originates in a state of mind as primitive as that of Sir Thomas Inskip, and is related to a time when the gods were believed to do everything, when tribal welfare was dependent upon the good will of the gods, and when there existed no distinction between the secular and the religious. The secular, in fact, had not yet come into existence. The gods were supreme, and man's conscious concern was to keep in their good graces. To offend the gods was then the greatest crime man could commit, and society to protect itself was bound to see that the gods were kept in good humour. Curiously, as we shall see, this aspect of blasphemy is the one that remains, and its nature is fully exposed in our Common Law of Blasphemy. The only operative ground of a Blasphemy Law in this country is the social aspect. That, as we shall see, makes the Blasphemy Law, not less but more dangerous than if the social side of the offence of blasphemy had died out and only the religious aspect remained. Religiously the law against blasphemy would be to-day as ridiculous as compelling a man to go to Church. It would be laughed out of existence

* * *

Law and Blasphemy

Blasphemy began as a religious offence, and from the time of the Norman Conquest until 1640, it re-

mained a religious offence, subject to the jurisdiction of the Ecclesiastical Courts or (and) the Court of High Commission of later growth, which gave to the crown some of the power over matters that had previously been within the jurisdiction of the Ecclesiastical Courts alone. The function of the Ecclesiastical Courts covered a field that most moderns would hardly expect. They covered morals, religion, education, and involved such offences as perjury, witchcraft, drunkenness, the relations between the sexes, swearing and profane language, everything except such offences as treason, robbery from the person, personal assault, etc. But it is important to note that anything that came under such things as are now judged by the King's courts in cases of blasphemy then came under the jurisdiction of the Ecclesiastical Courts—in addition to the other offences noted.

But the Ecclesiastical Courts ceased to function in 1640. There were attempts to pass new laws concerning blasphemy under the Commonwealth, but, as all the laws passed in the time of Cromwell were declared void at the Restoration of Charles II., these do not now concern us.

What we are concerned with is the fact that the country was legally without any court that could try such an offence as blasphemy. But although the King's courts lacked the legal authority to do so, they did not lack the will, and power followed the will. Probably under the conviction that there ought to be some means of enforcing obedience to certain standards of conduct the courts of Common Law took the matter into their own hands, and among other things declared their power to act as the Ecclesiastical Courts had acted in such matters. The nature of this action was well stated in the case of Sir Charles Sedley, charged with indecency and blasphemy. The statement of the Judge presiding was "Notwithstanding there was not then any Star Chamber, yet they would have him know that the Court of King's Bench was the *custos morum* of the King's subjects, and it was then high time to punish such profane actions committed against all modesty, which were so frequent as if not only Christianity but morality also had been neglected."

But this, as I have said, was an act of usurpation by the courts, however justifiable it might have been in the cases of what would be now called secular offences, but which had previously been judged by the Ecclesiastical Courts. And it was followed, one might say logically followed, by the quite nonsensical statement that Christianity was part and parcel of the law of England, and was responsible for the completely foolish dictum that to criticize Christianity was to attack the law and constitution, and therefore an offence at law. But criticizing and attacking the law and constitution has never been an offence. Parliament could at any time alter any law we have, and

the very essence of political freedom is to be able to criticize the law and to agitate for its alteration.

Blasphemy having come into the secular courts in the manner described, cases became numerous. Men and women were tried and convicted for doubting the divinity of Jesus Christ, or for denying the existence of a soul, the inspiration of the Bible, the existence of God, and so forth. But the important fact to be noted here is that the alleged basis of these prosecutions, alleged or implied, was that blasphemy involved or implied some disturbance of the social order. Lord Sumner, I think, was correct when he said (House of Lords, *Bowman v. the Secular Society Limited*) that "the gist of the offence of blasphemy is a supposed tendency in fact to disturb the fabric of society generally." I agree with this because it was in the belief that to offend the tribal god was a danger to society that blasphemy, as an offence, came into existence.

* * *

The Present Position

The present state of the law of blasphemy is that the fundamentals of religion may be attacked provided the decencies of controversy are observed. That definition of blasphemy had been on the carpet during a large part of the nineteenth century, but it was finally laid down by Lord Chief Justice Coleridge, as we have just stated, in the trial of G. W. Foote. So far, good. I do not believe that Coleridge's law was good law, because while it reduced the offence of offending the deity, or denying the deity, to no greater consequence than a public house brawl, or, general incitement to a breach of the peace, it left out of sight the plain fact that the essence of blasphemy was an adverse criticism of established belief in God. All that can be said for it is that it made unbelief safer for "respectable" heresy, if only until such time as a retrogression set in and the "respectable" ones found themselves in hot water—when much of their heresy might be expected to disappear.

But the danger of the situation was well put by Lord Sumner in the very fine judgment he gave in the case cited. He said:—

The words as well as the acts which tend to endanger society differ from time to time in proportion as society is stable or insecure in fact, or is believed by its reasonable members to be open to assault. In the present day meetings or processions are held lawful, which fifty years ago would have been deemed seditious, and this is because, the times having changed, society is stronger than before. In the present day reasonable men do not apprehend the dissolution or the downfall of society because religion is publicly assailed. . . . Whether it is possible that in the future irreligious attacks . . . may come to be criminal in themselves is a matter that does not arise. *The fact that opinion grounded on experience has moved one way does not in law preclude the possibility of its moving on fresh experience in the other. . . . There is nothing in the general rules as to blasphemy and irreligion, as known to the law, which prevents us from varying their application to the particular circumstances of our time in accordance with that experience.*

I have italicized a portion of Lord Sumner's speech because it expresses a position for which I have always contended. The danger of the Blasphemy Law remains, and it is a very real danger. Engaged as we are in a war that is professedly in defence of democracy, the fact remains that we have seen before the war, and are seeing during the war, the establishment of dictatorships and the paring of individual liberty to an extent that would have shocked the country into resistance a couple of generations ago. That we have never had a democracy in this country is clear, but it is also plain that we have not in this country so real a

concern for individual liberty as once existed. Each political party is too ready to obey orders from the top, and if dictatorship weakens as it filters downwards, there is far too little resistance offered as it nears the bottom. In such an atmosphere democracy tends to weaken, not to manifest strength.

But, if my reader has followed me to this point, he, or she, will realize what I mean when I say that the existence of a common law of blasphemy contains an even greater threat than does statute law. For statute law defines distinctly its particular purpose; common law does not. It is built up on precedents, and these are, as Lord Sumner says, determined by the state of the moment and by the opinions of the moment. Today we are permitted legally to offer a criticism of Christian beliefs in respectable language, but to-morrow with a less liberal atmosphere it would be counted blasphemy to criticize Christianity at all. The last few years should have taught us that the world does not always move forward; sometimes it moves backward. So long as a blasphemy law exists the retrogression that is at least possible may cause a reversion of the blasphemy law to the stage at which any attempt to deal with the family, questions that concerns the relation of the sexes, or any question of education, of marriage, of divorce may become a question of blasphemy to a society that comes to regard the discussion of such matters as within the religious sphere.

I do not think this is a wild supposition. We must remember that the Roman Catholic Church still claims that morals, religion, marriage, the family and education, are subjects on which the Church have divine authority, and the State holds only a secondary position. Mr. Claud Golding, whose misunderstanding of the nature and scope of the law concerning blasphemy led me to write these notes, will now perhaps understand why our Government clings so tenaciously to the blasphemy laws. They are comparatively harmless at present, although the medium of much hypocrisy and the encouragement of much bigotry. But the Government is not so foolish as it would seem. It feels, the Churches feel, that such laws while not so greatly needed to-day, may be of great usefulness to established retrogressive interests. They are narrowed in their scope to-day, but they may be widened to-morrow. At the beginning of the last century, Sir William Lawrence, one of the leading surgeons of his time, was denied the copyright of his *Lectures on Man*, a purely physiological work, because it denied the existence of a soul in man. Twenty years later a score of men and women were in prison at one time for selling Paine's *Age of Reason*. There is hardly a law in operation that contains so many unsuspected threats to liberty as does the Common Law of Blasphemy. I do not wonder that Governments have done so little to encourage its abolition.

The only way to remedy a bad law is to end it.

CHAPMAN COHEN

CONTRASTS

"My children! My children!" hear mothers crying;
 ("Thank God, we've averted that anti-God pact!")
 "Before I've known Life," says the youth, "I'll be dying!"
 ("The bank rate is up; it's essential we act.")
 "These ruins our home?" moans the father in anguish;
 ("I fear that our rubber won't reach Hamburg, Ted.")
 In tin shelters the people "securely" may languish;
 ("Gad, it's cosy these nights under Whitehall, eh Ned?")

D.

A Question of Christian Ethics

The carpenter said nothing but
The butter's spread too thick.

Alice in Wonderland

AMBROSE BIERCE, the American humorist, said that politicians and priests have one thing in common with crabs. When they seem to be coming they are going, and when they appear to be turning to the right they are actually turning to the left. This, be it noted, by no means exhausts the shiftiness of these two types of publicists. For they both possess a real gift for duplicity in speech, so much so that both constantly use speech to disguise their thoughts, rather than to express them. This is especially remarkable when priests turn to politics, or when politicians turn Christian for half an hour to tickle the ears of their audiences.

This peculiarity is not confined to the excitement of an Eastonswill election, but extends to all sections of politicians, from premiers to parvenus. Should this type of politician refer to Russia, for example, he will describe all Russians as blatant Atheists; if he mentions Germans he will call them all adjectived Pagans. It is useless to remind him, gently or otherwise, that one cannot indict a nation in this breezy school-boy fashion. It is waste of time to mention that members of the Greek, Roman Catholic and Lutheran Churches are neither Atheists nor Pagans. The politician is out to kill his enemy with his mouth, and he will invoke the Odium Theologicum though the heavens fall.

The Right Hon. A Duff Cooper, D.S.O., M.P., is an example. Gifted above many of his political fellows, he does with ease what they do with difficulty. A good writer, a better speaker, he can "roar like a sucking dove" on any platform. With all his gifts, however, he never rises above the intelligence of the meanest of his audience, and he is not above the reproach of playing to the gallery. One hardly expects accuracy to the millionth of an inch in a politician, but, after all, there are such things as an Education Act, and Free Libraries. Yet when Mr. Cooper lets himself go he reminds us, irresistibly, of the orator that interested Artemus Ward, because he spoke with a mind untrammelled with any acquaintance with his subject. Here is a sample of Mr. Cooper's sentimentalism (*Evening Standard*, London, November 9):—

In Great Britain there are many sects—there is much divergence of doctrine, much difference of dogma, much doubt, much unbelief—but there exists also an almost universal acceptance of the Christian ethic. By this I mean that more than ninety-nine out of a hundred people in this land believe that it is better to be gentle and kind than fierce and brutal, that mercy and love are better than cruelty and hatred, that humility is a virtue, that weakness should be pitied, not despised, and that war, even in a just cause, is an evil thing.

This sort of thing is simply sentimental nonsense. It has not even the surprise of novelty, for it is one of the most overworked "chessnuts" of controversy. Over forty years ago Christian apologists used to say that Charles Bradlaugh was a Christian without knowing it; and years earlier emotional believers whimpered that the poet Shelley's most Anti-Christian writing was saturated with the teachings of Orthodoxy.

Mr. Cooper's contention that ninety-nine per cent of the population is animated by Christian humanism is not, and never has been, true. If it were even partially true there would be no necessity for societies for preventing cruelty to children, and preventing ill-treatment of animals. Lord Shaftesbury,

who spent his long life in promoting the welfare of children, and other philanthropic work, complained bitterly of the opposition he received at the hands of the Orthodox bishops and clergy. This so-called Religion of Love had been operative in England for near fifteen centuries before any attempt was made to house the ordinary people with some approval to decency. Even so, the reform was carried out by County and Borough Councils, and not by the Churches.

The Church of England, which is the most powerful religious body in the country, has never opposed war. England has waged war in every quarter of the globe. She has fought Abyssinians and Zulus, French and Germans, Russians and Spaniards, Dutchmen and Americans, Chinese and Soudanese, Egyptians and Afghans, without a bleat of protest from the Bench of Bishops, or from the leading clergy. Rather has this Church supported militarism by christening battleships, blessing regimental flags, and by permitting the clergy to act as regimental chaplains.

Public executions were the rule in Christian England until near the end of the nineteenth century, and were as popular as Bank Holidays to-day. Convicts and insane people were treated worse than wild animals until Victorian days, and the social habits of the working-class beggar description until the days of the Chartist. Hogarth's "Gin Alley" was not a painter's record of a single horror, but could be found in all the towns of England until the days of Dickens, and even later. Christian humanism indeed!

After two thousand years of mass
We've got as far as poison-gas.

Mr. Duff Cooper is guilty of the worst form of hypocrisy. As a man of some literary culture he should know that the so-called "Golden Rule" of the Christian Religion was a commonplace in religious thought long anterior to the advent of Christianity. He should also know that the Christian Religion has no monopoly in gentleness, kindness, and other similar virtues. If, however, Christianity be really the fountain of humanism, how comes it that this same Oriental religion should also teach the terrible dogma of eternal punishment and flame the fires of hell over the Christian world? And why did this Church, in the heyday of its power, burn heretics alive, and murder as "witches," the most helpless of their sex. How comes it also that the votes of the Bishops in the House of Lords is a shameful record? Bishops are not ordinary Christians, but Most Reverend Fathers of the Church, yet scores of measures for the bettering of the conditions of life of the working-class were opposed by these prelates. Nothing but unadulterated self-interest excited their action. None even voted for the abolition of the flogging of women in prison, or for the abolition of the whip in the Army and Navy.

In spite of Mr. Duff Cooper's protestations, these Right Reverend Fathers-in-God dwelt like the fabled gods of old Olympus. They lay beside their nectar, and imagined that the State existed to protect the interests of the nice, well-dressed, comfortable persons. Religion, they believe, exists to give the sanction of Omnipotence to Things As They Are. They share the conviction of the sanctity of an aristocracy which was expressed by the titled French lady, quoted by Carlyle, "The Almighty will think twice before damning a gentleman of his quality."

That Mr. Duff Cooper should court public approval as a modern Saint George defending Christianity proves to what shifts the champions of Orthodoxy are reduced. He may attract crowds by his high

spirits and boyish innocence, but he nullifies the effect of his own work by trying

To prove his doctrines orthodox
By apostolic blows and knocks.

It is really too late for an apologist for medievalism to be regarded seriously.

MIMNERMUS

A "Dead Cert."

THE language of the turf is Greek to the present writer. It would probably be described by the Censorship Bureau as "An uncommon language." By purists it might be dignified by the title, "A very common (or vulgar) tongue."

Ordinary people like the writer cannot plead total unacquaintance with the terminology of the turf. Everybody knows that "Tipsters" exist by "telling the tale" (on "mutual terms" the advertisements of some tipsters say). This "tale" is called a "tip"—although, while the "tip" is sold by the Expert to his Client, it is actually the Client who pays, not only "in the long run," but even in the hundred yards handicap also.

Of these "tips," some are said to be "direct from the horse's mouth." But even a horse may be mistaken in estimating the merits of his—or her—competitors. Even St. Paul knew enough about racing to assure his innocent followers that "they which run in a race run all, but ONE receiveth the prize" (1 Cor. ix. 24). Probably if Paul had hidden this "tip" from them they might have imagined that ALL the runners—even the non-starters perhaps—won the first prize.

But there is a better category of "tips" than the "horse's mouth" class; it is called a "certainty" or even a "dead cert." Incidentally we are bound to confess our ignorance as to why Death should add to the attractiveness of a "cert." But apparently death enhances the "certainty" of a "certainty." It reminds us that Christians teach us that all sorts of good things may be had—after we die. Possibly the horse "tipped" to win, wins only after it is dead, even if it never once won "on earth."

There are no "tips" or "bets" in the Bible—if we except the "tip" (of his finger) which Dives wanted to send to Lazarus from Hell to Heaven. Wagers are missing, but there are "winnings"—and—needless to say any amount of "losings" in Holy Scripture. Although "gambling" is not mentioned by that name, there are over fifty references to Lotteries! "Casting lots" was a common way of deciding questions which otherwise might have needed brains to settle. An unfortunate interpretation is sometimes put on Jonah i. 7, where it tells of the Prophet falling among a crowd of irate seamen. The passage says "The LOT fell on Jonah"; but it only refers to a lottery to decide which of the passengers should be cast overboard, and Jonah drew the joker in the pack.

In Bible days a lottery saved the time which we spend in study and debate. "It causeth contentions to cease" (says Proverbs xviii. 18). It was wicked for anybody to interfere with the "lot" of the righteous (Psl. 125, 3). Land had to be divided by a lottery amongst the claimants (Num. xxvi. 55). The Fuehrer Joshua, the *petit-caporal* of his day, having exterminated with ruthless slaughter the rightful owners of the "Promised" Land, partitioned the conquered territory. Several long chapters describe how Joshua superintended the Lottery by which the lucky tribes of God's chosen People "won" the good,

bad, or indifferent portions of land. The tribe of Joseph grumbled, describing their "Lot" as "that hill"; Joshua obligingly said, "Thou art a great people," take a couple o' lots! And he gave the grumblers—a Mountain—telling them, if they didn't like it, just to "cut it down" (see Joshua xvi. 17-18).

As to horses, God gave a distinct warning to His people never to put their trust in a horse (Psl. 20, 7). Jehovah disliked horses (had He perhaps lost money on them?) His people were prohibited from importing horses or even breeding them. In a battle against Zobah, King David, "the man after God's own heart," captured 1,700 horses, of which booty the brutal king mutilated 1,600 poor beasts by cutting their ham-strings (2 Sam. viii. 4).

The "tip from the horse's mouth" may have originated in words from the Book of Job (xxxix. 25) where beside many rather splendid things a horse is said to do, we learn that the horse actually speaks: we even know the horse's very words: limited vocabulary, true, but it was so clever a horse that it SMELT the shouting on the battle-field. Other profane commentators might retort that the Bible more appropriately gives a better "innings" to the donkey. In fact the Kings of Bloodthirsty Israel rode on asses and mules, as did the Divine Son of David later on. The story of the Talking Ass (Num. 22) suggests more certainly the real animal from whose "mouth" come all the "dead" and other "certainties."

There are many "certainties" to be found in Holy Writ. As we might expect Bible "certainties" are mostly of ill omen. It was never a "cert" of having a jolly good time. On the contrary, the Prophet of God threatened the People of God that they might "Know for a certainty that the Lord Your God" was going to set for them "snares and traps and scourges" . . . "till ye perish from off this good land which the Lord hath given you." Beware the Gods when they bring "gifts" of that sort!

A pamphlet recently came into our hands wherein some queer "certainties" are dealt with. *Open-Minded Certainty*, by Raymond Holt, M.A., B.Litt., Tutor of Manchester College, Oxford, contains much that is indubitably wise and reasonable. If he had not used that word "certainty," one might forgive him. But it seems a contradiction in terms to speak of a "certainty" which yet is "open" or leaves one open to doubt. A "certainty" is something which has already dissipated doubt. It is something beyond all further doubt. To quote the *Oxford Dictionary*, a certainty relates to an undoubted fact. It is indeed used in connexion with something which has actually happened which is inevitable.

Outside the sporting parlance to which we have already referred, a "certainty" does not admit of correction. Of course a "practical certainty" like a "dead cert." is something different. Mr. Holt's work perhaps alludes to this type. He deplors the fact that to-day:—

Many men and women are persuaded that the only alternative to complete dogmatism is complete scepticism.

To us it sounds like a reasonable proposition. Knowledge creates scepticism. One finds out Bible errors in science, history and morals. Can an honest intelligent man abstain from an all-round scepticism about the Bible generally? We are not impressed with Mr. Holt's "Preface," which says:—

In the course of time men have discovered more about the nature of God.

Men discover more about the nature of God as they fit themselves for that knowledge

Christians believe that no interpretation of ultimate reality is adequate which does not recognize personality in God.

Perhaps Mr. Holt will find time to enlighten us as to the "certainties" men have "discovered" lately about the "nature of God." If he means that we now know a great deal about the nature of men's belief in God (and other illogicalities) then Mr. Holt is right. So far Christians—like the rest of mankind—have lost the "certainties" they used to think they possessed. They have found no new light of any kind establishing the existence of the God they worship.

It is a queer sort of "Open-mindedness" which starts with the assumption that nothing is "adequate" unless it conforms to one's preconceived "certainties." "Personality in God" was natural enough when men really believed in gods. We cannot imagine even an "ultimate future" which will accept a God without personality. Such a conceit would not be a God at all, but a "dead cert." of what all gods were, are, and must, in the nature of things, remain—something made by man in the image of man; a figment of human imagination, and as much a "certainty" as "Old Joe's Triple Event for Newmarket."

GEORGE BEDBOROUGH

Some Proposals and Opinions

(Concluded from page 813)

THERE is with Freethinkers the natural dislike of interfering with the most intimate and private human relationships. Yet every reformatory measure must do this in some degree. Income Tax fluctuations have a direct bearing on the number of children the taxpayer can afford to bring up and educate. The segregation of a criminal or a lunatic directly affects his chances for reproduction. We give our consent to all manner of schemes affecting human liberties.

Nor is there any weight in the objection that under eugenic reform human beings would be regarded like farm animals in a stockyard. "The stock-keeper does not limit his efforts to securing a good ancestry. He attempts also to secure the best environment. Why should those who wish to copy the efforts of the stock-keeper in one direction [nurture] find that his methods in another direction are inappropriate and inadmissible?" (Carr-Saunders).

The effectiveness of sterilization is not in doubt. In the case of a dominant gene the effect is immediate and in the case of a simple recessive R. A. Fisher has shown that given random mating (a concession) even then the defect is reduced from 100 in 10,000 to 89.6 in the first generation, 69.4 in the second and 59.2 in the third. This is without interfering with the carriers.

There are all grades of mental and physical deficiency, and so at some point or points an arbitrary decision would have to be made, but this should constitute no permanent barrier to effective action.

There is evidence that a defective physical equipment is not correlated with high standards of mentality (exceptions will, of course, loom out of all proportion to statistics) so that there does not seem to be any risk of damaging mental calibre in regulating the birth of physical defectives. The argument that men of genius have had accompanying mental disorders has been disposed of by Havelock Ellis in a straight appeal to facts. Even in the case of the epileptic Dostoevsky the condition may have been induced and not hereditary. And the occasional production of a talented individual from a defective stock, theoretically possible, cannot compensate for the surrounding prevalence of defect.

The physical shortcomings of such as Alexander

Pope and Edward Gibbon do not, of course, come within the eugenic meaning of hereditary defect. The mental deterioration of Lombroso was such as might come to any normal overworked person, the "visions" of the poet Blake would not earn for him to-day a certificate of insanity, nor would the queer effeminacy of Cowper (though the latter had also periods of instability).

In the case of sexual aberration, for which there appears to be some evidence, of varying strength, in such as Julius Cæsar, Kit Marlowe, Shakespeare, Hans Andersen, Walt Whitman, Michael Angelo and Oscar Wilde, it would not be easy to maintain that such is always necessarily of an anti-social character, and in the case of the wanderer the deviation may be *faute de mieux*. And since it has been held that sexual aberration has far more addicts than was once supposed, the few examples given may not be extraordinary, particularly as the lives of outstanding people are objects of interest, and so more open to report.

It is important to get the two great factors in individual behaviour, nature and nurture, into an accurate perspective, and the latter may be extended to include the social conditions prevailing. Even Clarence Darrow, who kindheartedly looked on the criminal as an unfortunate misfit, allowed that a defective make-up could be a determining factor given the environmental stimulus. Criminals, he said, are not born, but made, but may be "born with an imperfect equipment for making adjustments to life," which comes near to smuggling in by the back door a proposition he has turned out at the front gate.

It is, of course, possible for him to argue that under different social conditions that defective equipment would not be taxed, but he can here be met with the positive Eugenicist argument that any change for the better in social conditions must be the work of men and women of good quality, and it is precisely at the supply of such that Eugenics aims. And so, when Darrow argues that social conditions to-day predispose towards crime, it is at least equally reasonable to blame the type of individual being produced. Man precedes society, and in blaming social conditions for the behaviour of men Darrow overlooks that men's behaviour determines social conditions.

For his purpose Darrow divides society into (a) the criminal and (b) the State. The first he proves to be a product of bad conditions and frees him from condemnation. But what is sauce for the goose is sauce for the gander. Those called the State must likewise be products of conditions, and, according to Darrow's precept, should not be censured. Yet he speaks scornfully, in his book on Crime, of the educators and the "crimes of society."

If we allow, for the sake of argument, that the State owes it to the criminal to reform him, and to the defective to support him, should the latter also be permitted to reproduce his kind? If so, the State may have to spend more money on them with no return. Granted that the M.D. may be kept out of harm's way, the criminal be reformed, the physical defective have his discomforts alleviated, is it not better to produce those individuals who are right to start with? If you desire a table, which would you accept as a gift, pieces of wood which might with difficulty, expense and time be knocked into a table, or a good table? Man is so prolific with offspring that the time and money devoted to the treatment of misfits might better be spent in producing fit and mentally efficient individuals. And if the present conditions make A a defective, and B a normal being, the contention that A is worth persevering with as an ingredient to adorn the next stage of social conditions, can be supported only in a maze of shadowy conjecture.

The common sense view would appear to be as follows: if the deficiency is nurlural, alter the nurture; if hereditary, breed out if the gene is dominant, and if recessive, control the effective reproduction.

Actual eugenic experiments in various countries may be consulted in a cheap Forum Series publication, *Human Sterilization To-day* (1934) by a first-hand inquirer, Cora Hodson, while in the same series Major Leonard Darwin's *What is Eugenics?* (1928) is an elementary survey. Another readable account is George Whitehead's *The Road to Health*.

Any attempt to legalize eugenics might raise questions of primary importance. As a caricature we may suppose that through long inaction the numbers of the feeble-minded had grown so that they constituted a voting power strong enough to oppose any measure for eugenic reform. Democratic control would then mean the death-knell of cultured progress.

If the politician is wise he will base his policy on the scientific knowledge at his disposal. But as the politician is *not* wise he will not do this. His brains are entirely concentrated in his seat. Remedy—get rid of the politician and put the scientist in his place (giving science its widest meaning). Then, instead of a people "getting the Government it deserves," it might get one better than it deserves, i.e., a Government of the people for the people, but not by the people. Whereas a recognized training decides who shall be a judge or a doctor apparently a mere counting of noses is enough to decide who shall undertake the science and art of Government. The results are obvious.

Haldane, in his discussion of eugenic reform, recognizes the same problem, and points to young U.S.S.R. students of Sverdlov University who are studying social science (he saw it, and vouches for the project being genuine), so that in about 15 years time (1947) "you will for the first time in the history of the world have a scientifically educated governing class at the head of a great State." Levy has in several places said that men of science have more value to the community than the limits of their present operations allow, and McCabe in his *Riddle of the Universe To-day*, writes, "The method of science has proved so versatile and profitable an instrument for exploring truth that a body of men of the highest ability, imbued with its spirit, must be employed upon the mighty problems of our time. In many countries . . . the new arrangement has begun in a very modest form." Haldane (1932) indicated the dependence of Russia on the organizing ability of 15 men (Committees of Gosplan); he remarks, "I believe in Democracy because equality of opportunity is impossible where inherited rank or wealth is important, and for no other reason," and he regards Democracy not as an end but a route, and "unless the mass of the people are willing in the last resort to fight for their convictions, Democracy should be replaced by the Government of the minority."

He who would defend our Democracy as a final permanent system is he who would cry halt to evolution. In his *Revolutions of Civilization*, Sir W. M. F. Petrie has contended at length that Democracy is inevitably the last phase of every civilization known to history. For lighter reading the deficiencies of Demos may be consulted with profit and amusement in Bernard Shaw's *The Apple Cart*, a great play with a message, or great because it has a message.

Hogben, advocating extreme caution in eugenic reform, observes that "no society is safe in the hands of a few clever people." I should be loth to conclude from this that it is safer under Democracy in the hands of a few stupid ones.

G. H. TAYLOR

Reflexions upon Death

VERY few people take up a sensible attitude regarding death, and no doubt many think that a fear of death is ingrained in human nature. This idea is entirely incorrect, and is due to lack of knowledge regarding the origin of this great fear of death and what comes after.

Most un-civilized and semi-civilized peoples do not fear death, whether they believe in a future life or not. A certain apprehension towards death has probably existed for a great length of time, but it was that greatest of all the world's evils, the Christian religion, that caused people to fear death as so many do, and Christianity must take the whole of the blame.

The doctrine of a literal hell, where the damned were to suffer the most terrible tortures for eternity, stands supreme as the cruellest and vilest invention of the human imagination.

Let us examine this belief in a hell. It is prevalent throughout many sects. The Roman Catholic Church is the worst but not the only offender. We find in the Athanasian Creed that those who do not have true faith shall perish everlastingly, and although there is a desire among a large part of the clergy to get rid of the belief in hell, the Church of England still accepts the doctrine of everlasting punishment. Among other religious bodies, that vast organization, the Salvation Army, which has received so much publicity recently because of the retirement of its General, bases its whole foundation on the doctrine of hell. Its motto is "Blood and Fire," and among its articles it states that they "believe in the endless punishment of the wicked." This is the principal teaching of the "Army," and when we consider that this body has active branches all over the globe, the tremendous damage that is being done can be readily realized.

All Christian leaders throughout history have believed and taught the existence of a literal hell and the most vivid descriptions, which for their brutality have seldom been equalled, have been given of the place, for real place it was supposed to be.

The sadistic outlook of the early Christian is reflected in these descriptions, and he seemed to revel at the thought of the suffering of others. Worst of all teachings was that of the damnation of children who were not baptized, a belief still held among Christians.

It is obvious to anyone that the doctrine of hell when taught to children, instils in them a horror of death which they can never completely throw off. How much kinder and better it would be if children were taught to look upon death in those famous words of Anatole France: "I am, it is not; it is, I cease to be." How much meaning there is in these few words, a better and more precise description it would be difficult to find. There is no need to fear death, for, as Ingersoll said: "Upon the shadowy shore of death the sea of trouble casts no wave. . . . Hearts of dust do not break."

Attention may here be drawn to the fact that several Biblical passages contradict the doctrine of hell, and show quite a logical attitude towards death. I quote one here, viz: "The dead know not anything, neither have they any more a reward." Eccl. ix. 5.

Co-existent with a belief in hell is the belief in eternal bliss. There is no doubt in my mind that eternal happiness would become first boring and then unbearable, but it is obviously preferable to eternal torture. The doctrine of retribution is claimed to have a civilizing influence and to act as a moral incentive. This has been proved incorrect, the reverse being actually the case. What state of morality is likely to result from a teaching that repentance can wipe out all crimes in the eyes of the Almighty?

Now let us consider the belief in immortality irrespective of any judgment day, plainly and simply an eternal life for all. Perhaps the most convincing refutation of this belief can be found by a consideration of the life of a human being just like any other mammal. Every human being has a definite commencement. The precise moment when the spermatozoa meets the ovum and union takes place can be directly observed. This is the start of one's existence. Existence is, therefore, obviously not eternal, and it is irrational to accept, as eternal and with-

out end, an individual phenomenon which has such a beginning.

Among certain savages it is thought that each individual lives on earth, dies, and goes to a land beyond, remains there for varying periods of time, then returns to a life on earth by entering a pregnant woman, is born and the cycle repeats itself eternally. In these cases, however, the nature of conception is not understood.

Knowledge has always been the great enemy of the Church, and will finally cause its overthrow. It can be realized that when man knew very little of the Universe and thought that the Earth was the central body, and that all other bodies were for his benefit, he should think that he was some chosen being, who alone of all living creatures was capable of existing for ever. As knowledge of the cosmos increased, this became ridiculous. This is brilliantly portrayed by Voltaire in his tale *Micromegas*. The great French philosopher shows in his inimitable style how minute and insignificant our World and ourselves really are, and yet how important we consider ourselves to be. How absurd it is to think that this tiny lump of clay which we term the Earth has been specially designed in the infinite boundless Universe as the temporary abode of minute creatures in order that each of these puny animals may be tested whether or not it is deserving of an eternal life.

Returning again to Anatole France and quoting from the same work, *The Garden of Epicurus*, we find the following passage:—

"Beyond the planets we discover, instead of the Emyrean of the elect and the angels, a hundred millions of suns rolling through space, escorted each by its own procession of satellites, invisible to us. Amidst this infinitude of systems our Sun is but a bubble of gas and our Earth a drop of mud."

Then again:—

"The heavens which men deemed incorruptible, know of no eternity but the eternal flux of things."

And still vast numbers of people believe that the opportunity of an everlasting life has been bestowed on man alone by some benevolent Creator!

But those who expect to live again after death will not be disappointed for the dead are not capable of feeling disappointment, and it is as well.

C. McCALL.

Make Profit Now

THE war situation must have brought about many changes in the associations of men and women. Jobs have gone "west," and businesses closed down, whilst National Defence, Military Service and other new institutions have opened up new social relationships. Now is the time for a "revival" of propaganda.

The last war had very similar characteristics, and in looking for the alleged virtues of war, few writers appear to have remembered the enormous amount of heresy it bred. This was not so much because men threw "god" overboard, when they found the evils of war incompatible with "his" existence, it was rather because of the different people and different points of view they met during a period when much time could only be employed in conversation.

Not only on the Western Front then, and in the forces generally, but on the "Home Front" we, who are now relics of the last war, can enhance our value to the "Freethought" cause. In this respect the intellectual profit of the last war, small as it may have been, can be at least repeated if not doubled.

Think of the A.R.P services, where men and women are "standing to" for hours on end with really little actual occupation. Argument on football, politics, etc., taking their toll of the hours. Why not religion?

The writer's "shift" on the local ambulance squad, in three weeks has now had great inroad made on its faith. The time is approaching for the distribution of a few pamphlets, and then perhaps a transfer of "shift" will be the logical thing to ask for. In addition to this, these new associates are themselves potential propa-

gandists, not perhaps as fully fledged or even half-fledged speakers, but as ordinary men and women with families, friends, and an outer ring of acquaintances. These acquaintances in turn may carry the seeds into their homes and so on. Are we all making use of these chances? Isn't this our historic function? Large membership, as though to build up a huge caucus, is a dream cherished by enthusiastic recruits, but soon pales in the face of facts and in the realization that social permeation is the one "SOLID" fact. The spoken word cannot be recalled; the ear drum of your listener once acted upon by the vibrations in the atmosphere set up by your vocal chords, travel the nerve to the brain cells and become a physiological fact. The cortex of the hearer's brain is no longer identical; agree with you he may not, and in opposition he may rant, but this is only proof of an effect created. In this sense an idea is as much a real concrete fact in the universe as any dialectical materialist should ever want; your hearers are never THE SAME again.

So make the most of the occasion, perhaps make up for lost time and help the Peace, when it comes, to be worth having.

JOHN V. SHORT

Acid Drops

The Maharajah of Bhutan has sent a silk scarf to King George, and has ordered the Lamas of all monasteries to perform religious ceremonies that will bring victory to the Allies. Excellent! But is there not the possibility of this leading to some disagreement when victory is attained? We have ordered prayers in this country to the three gods of the Established Church, and there are other miscellaneous prayers offered by other people. France manages to get along without any national deity, but the French have been peculiar in this respect for more than a century. Still, when the war is won, may there not be a dispute as to which God did the trick? And may not those who have not bothered about any God claim that they did a little too?

The *Sunday Express* gave to the world the news that Canon Woodward (R.C.) of Tipperary, died as the result of drinking a disinfectant which he took to be altar wine. It is curious that with so many saints in existence not one of them took the trouble to prevent an accident to one of the servants of the Church.

The President of the Union of Modern Free Churchmen (not to be confused with the Modern Churchmen's Union) writes on "The Evolution of the Idea of Salvation," in the November issue of the *Modern Churchman*. Mr. Bulcock does his best to prove that Salvation meant—or means to-day—something fine and moral. We think he fails to sublimate an essentially cowardly piece of sheer superstition. No Christian Church has ever written in its creeds any kind of moral content of this crude and disreputable belief. The Salvation Army is far from unique in its orthodox idea that there is a Hell of real torture awaiting all who are not saved. The plain Bible teaching is that "He that believeth shall be saved" in contradistinction to "He that believeth not, shall be damned." The fatuous "death-bed-repentance" has no morality about it—it is obviously only a way of Salvation from individual suffering in hell after death.

An international News Service reports that at Trinity Church, Mass., the clergyman read the whole of the New Testament to his congregation. But the message says that half-hour intervals were given "to break the monotony." It was rather cruel of the agency to add this last.

Summoned at Barnet Police Court for keeping a dog without a licence, a man pleaded, "I work for a Bible Society, so I don't want this news spread." Well that does not say very much for the influence of the Bible.

A debtor in the Bankruptcy Court, the other day explained how he was swindled by some men who undertook to turn water into petrol. We wonder how many real Christians will smile over this story, but will take the gospel story of Jesus turning water into wine without the slightest alteration in the facial muscles. Yet belief in the one case ought to prepare the way for belief in the other.

The *Church Times* continues to be greatly concerned about the position of the chaplains in the Army. It considers it an "absurd anomaly that the Chaplain-General of the Army, the Chaplain of the Fleet, and the Chaplain of the Air Force should be under the orders of Colonel Blimp and Admiral Dug-Out." We could respect the feelings of the *Church Times* in this matter if it manifested some consideration in the direction of preventing the prevention of compulsory Church parades and securing the abolition of entering recruits as members of the Church who have no connexion with it, and who, when joining the army, are told by military officials that they must enter themselves as belonging to some Church.

The Bishop of Gambia believes that the present state of the world is the work of the devil. He believes that the devil created the war so that parsons may be drawn away to serve with the troops, and so take them from undoing the devil's work in the dark places in our cities. Religiously that seems quite a reasonable theory. Religiously Jesus came nearly two thousand years ago to get rid of the influence of the devil, but the latter seems very active still—speaking religiously.

We offer a suggestion. Why does not the Church withdraw all its parsons from the army and other forces? The men have not asked for them; if that had been the case it might have been suggested that they were in league with Satan. But it seems foolish for the Church to go on supporting the devil by sending them to France as chaplains. We offer this suggestion because we like to see a good contest. But we imagine they will feel quite at home amongst the natives of Gambia—spiritually and mentally, we mean.

The ordinary view of Miracle in the Christian theology is summarized correctly in the *Cambridge Bible Companion* thus:—

Miracles formed an important element in the work of Jesus Christ, being not only Divine acts, but forming also a part of the Divine teaching. Christianity is founded on the greatest of all miracles—the Resurrection of our Lord. If this be admitted, other miracles cease to be improbable.

Roman Catholic teaching is the same. This is not wonderful. St. Paul, the practical Founder of Christianity, declared that

If Christ be not raised your Faith is vain. (1 Cor. xvii.)

The Dean of St. Paul's—like most "Modernists"—is sitting on the fence, hesitating to accept and daring not to reject the exploded pretence that miracles ever happened. In his book: *Our Faith in God*, the artful Dean says:—

The evidence of miracles was never the argument of the deeper mind, and at the present day it is singularly unconvincing. . . . Miracle by itself could never be a guarantee of the truth.

But:—

It would be foolish to deny the miraculous in the gospels, and absurd to suppose that our Christian Faith could survive in its historical form if we gave up belief in the Resurrection. (page 72).

What can these statements mean except that the Dean is well aware of the false basis on which rest the Christian beliefs, but that he is unwilling to say so in terms which mean anything definite?

Under the headline "Tons of Bibles," the Church of England Newspaper's correspondent in China reports that when Chungking was recently bombarded from the air, urgent messages reached Shanghai asking for quantities of Bibles to be sent the 1,100 miles to Chungking. The Missionary Printery must have imagined that a pious and profitable BELIEF in the old book had suddenly awakened. Not at all. Chungking merchants calculated that while sand-bags may endure for a few weeks, the Word of the Lord (if strongly bound) "endureth for ever" practically. The fact that the wily importers realized a profit on the trucks the Bibles were packed in, enforces the Bible saying "All Scripture is profitable" to somebody or other.

In four years there has been a decline in the number of children at Church of England schools to the number of 241,236. But there still remains in these schools 1,456,371. Still the saving of this two hundred thousand children is something on which we may pride ourselves and congratulate the children. But what a work there is before us to rescue the million and a half! So we must peg away. Other forces than direct Freethought propaganda have been responsible for decline noted in the *Church Year Book*, but our influence has played its part with both children and adults.

The Dean of Exeter is evidently not impressed by the Psalmist's description "all men are liars." He indeed returns the "compliment" (in the *Guardian*) by the polite intimation that "what the Psalmist says is on the whole not true." The phrase "on the whole" politely softens the blow, but it means exactly the same as the more direct "Liar!" of the Psalmist. By the way, the Dean is charming in his satire on Christian Pragmatism:—

There are some who think of religion as a serviceable aid. It can be harnessed to a national purpose. It is a useful thing for the people to have some religion. It will help to put spirit into them. It will make them patient under burdens of taxation and hardships of life. It will give them courage and perseverance. And, if they should die, it will console them with the hope of a hereafter. "Those in favour of using religion as an instrument for the really great end which we are pursuing, hold up your hands. Thank you, gentlemen, that's carried. Now we can proceed to exploit the Church."

This is excellently put, and is intended as a satire on those who think Christianity is useful whether it is true or not. Unfortunately for the Dean, it applies to about seventy-five per cent of Christians in this country, and the other twenty-five per cent are counted by them as very ignorant.

Fifty Years Ago

WHEN the priests ascertained they could no longer confine the practice of medicine to themselves it was stigmatized and denounced. At the Council of Tours, held in 1163 by Pope Alexander III., it was maintained that the devil sought to seduce the priesthood from their holy office by following the mundane methods of medicine, and in 1215 Pope Innocent III. fulminated an anathema against surgery by ordaining, that as the Church abhorred all sanguinary practices (shown by its taking life without the effusion of blood), no priest could be permitted to follow surgery, or to perform any operations in which either instruments of steel or of fire were employed; and that they should refuse their benediction to all those who professed and pursued it. Much prejudice was excited by the Church against the practice of dissection.

The feeling that physicians were interfering with the judgments of God has lasted to our own time, and many can remember how the use of chloroform in parturition was denounced as an attempt to thwart old Jahveh's curse on Eve.

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J. ANDERSON.—Pleased to know we have been of assistance to you. But the other point of view is always worth considering. A wise man learns from the blunders as well as from the wisdom of others.

A. HANSON.—Of course the excision may have been accidental. It may be also that the editor took your use of religious phraseology as seriously meant.

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Sugar Plums

Suppose this war lasts five years. Suppose also that the present governmental policy with regard to the "Home Front" is continued—successfully continued. For five years the people will have been trained not to be too ready to talk about the war to their neighbours, and above all to be on their guard when in train, tram or bus. They must regard every stranger who speaks to them about the war with suspicion. They must beware letting it be known that their Jack is training with his regiment in Suffolk, or that their Tom is with his regiment in France. That will give the Germans valuable military information which they could not otherwise acquire. The people will not listen to rumours, and by no means tell another what they have heard. They must believe only in what government representatives of the Government tell them, and they must loyally obey orders from any appointed official, from the A.R.P. official to the Prime Minister, and from all the countless controllers and sub-controllers. The last thing we must do, if we wish to win the war, is to be critical, independent, or enquiring.

Suppose the five years have passed and we have won the war. What really shall we have won? We shall have become—if the training is a success—by this self-training a nation of credulous people; from never criticizing anything, a nation of suspicious people; as a result of treating our friends and neighbours and acquaintances with suspicion, a nation of timid people; because we have been living in a state of suppressed fear, an un-knowledgeable people; because we have not tried to understand the war, a people unfitted for political liberty—because we shall have lost the habit of criticizing the Government, a primary function of genuine democracy. We shall be thoroughly accustomed to being told what to

think, what to do and what to believe. Our only quality that will have gained in strength will be that of obedience. At the end of five years (if the present policy is successful) we shall be ready for Fascism, Communism, Socialism, or any other 'ism that the Government of the day thinks fit to force on us. Force is the wrong word, because no force will be required. We shall look for orders and feel lost without them. We shall be doing of our own will what Germany could accomplish only by unequalled tyranny and obscene brutality.

Mr. Cohen has to acknowledge the receipt of a Christmas present in the shape of a case of wine from an Australian reader who signs himself "Aussie Australia," and giving greetings to "The World's Record for Journalism." We presume this refers to our continuous contributions to the *Freethinker* for 42 years. Anyway we will drink our friend's health.

The following season's greetings from Professor Chel-lew, per our business manager:—

I would have you salute your brave editor whom I regard with highest esteem. I not only raise my hat to him, but my head and my heart also.

We hope we deserve some of the good things that have been said of us of late. But as we have said often, the trouble is not creating a reputation, but living up to it. At any rate, we disown all responsibility for what has been said.

Our friend and colleague, Mr. R. H. Clifton, has been of late contributing some useful letters to the *Croydon Advertiser*. In a recent issue of the *Advertiser*, replying to a Christian speaker, a Mr. J. J. Virgo, he meets one of the customary slanders by a direct challenge for anyone to prove from the records of the Society's works or from the files of the *Freethinker*, anything which is subversive to human freedom. That is rather unfair of Mr. Clifton. To expect a Christian to justify false statements concerning Freethought and Freethinkers is too much. Still we do not expect that Mr. Clifton is so innocent as to expect the challenge will be accepted.

Messrs. J. T. Brighton and J. Clayton send encouraging reports of meetings held in their respective areas. Audiences have been good, and a keen interest shown in the Freethought message, in fact additional inconvenience seems to be the only effect of war conditions. Given a warm comfortable hall, a good speaker, a few enthusiastic workers, and successful meetings can be held. Unfortunately the combination is sometimes upset by the difficulty of obtaining a suitable hall

THEIST TO ATHEIST

I shall be better off than you, for if there is no God you and I will be equal. But if there is a God, I shall not have offended against something which I believed did not exist, since to sin one must either know or will. Do you not see that even a foolish man would not think that a porter had injured him if the porter had done it accidentally, or had taken him for someone else, or if he had been drunk? How much more then should God forbear to grow angry with us for not having known him since he refused us the means of knowing him. On your honour now, if belief in God were so necessary to us, if it were a matter of eternity, would not God himself have inculcated in us all a light as clear as the Sun which hides itself from no one? To feign that he plays hide-and-seek with men, says like children, "Cuckoo, there he is!" that is to say sometimes hides himself to some and reveals himself to others, that is to make oneself a God who is either silly or malicious, for if I have come to know him through the strength of my genius, the merit is his and not mine, since he might have given me an imbecile soul or imbecile organs which would have made me incapable of knowing him. And, on the contrary, if he gave me a mind incapable of understanding him, it is not my fault but his, since he could have given me a mind so keen that I should have comprehended him.—From *Voyage to the Moon*, by Cyrano de Bergerac. (Born 1619, died 1655).

Letters to a Christian Friend

(21) FAITH AND PROGRESS

MY DEAR CHARLES,

We can agree, I think, that during the ages when slavery was a flourishing institution the normal attitude of Christians was one which accepted slavery, acquiesced in slavery, used slavery, encouraged slavery, and at times defended slavery by reference to the Christian scriptures. We can agree also that to-day, when slavery is no longer the fashion, there are few Christians, especially in Protestant circles, who would openly do any of those things their predecessors did or use those arguments their predecessors used—in relation to slavery.

Apparently there has been a big change in the prevailing Christian thought, and in the "Christian spirit."

But has there?

To-day we no longer have slaves (at least, not slaves admitted to be such), but we still have the poor and the dispossessed, the working-classes and the proletariats. You may know that delightful Christian hymn, "All things bright and beautiful," and the exquisite verse which has now, I believe, been consigned to the not inconsiderable museum wherein are housed so many other discarded inspirations of the Christian spirit:—

The rich man in his castle,
The poor man at his gate,
God made them high or lowly,
And ordered their estate.

It is not so long since this bright and beautiful belief was the rule rather than the exception among Christians in England, sung and believed in as fervently by the Christian poor man at the gate and in the hovel as by the Christian rich man in his castle. In less pointed contrast the same sentiment is still featured in the catechisms and thundered from the pulpits of the principal Christian Churches.

Notice anything? There hasn't been such a big change in the Christian spirit after all. The change-over on the subject of slavery is simply an accident of time and events, part of the change-over in general opinion on the subject inspired by humanitarian sentiment. For though slavery has gone the Christian arguments which supported it are still in use to support and condone other phases of the economic life.

The economic order changes, and the mass of Christian opinion simply swings along with it. Slavery and serfdom have vanished or are vanishing, and by now most Christians have become their critics rather than their upholders and defenders. But only because slavery and serfdom have themselves become out-moded. Not because of any spontaneous change in the Christian outlook. Christians of the "All things bright and beautiful" type (and let us remember that they are always the majority—and a far bigger majority than the more vocal minority would have us believe) would denounce slavery very righteously and hold up pious hands more-in-sorrow-than-in-wrath that their Christian predecessors should have so "misinterpreted" or "distorted" the Gospel as to support slavery—yet they are themselves still using towards the poverty and social inequalities of the current economic order the very same arguments used by those they condemn. And, incidentally, the very same arguments used or implied by Jesus himself. *Plus ça change, plus c'est la même chose.* Slavery, having ceased to exist, need no longer be considered a vital part of God's law—but poverty and economic inequalities and social frustrations (which have not yet ceased to exist) are still part

and parcel of that law. Slaves are no longer taught Christian obedience and contentment with the lot to which God has called them—because the slaves themselves are no longer there to be taught; but the poorer classes are still taught the traditional obedience and contentment with the estate which God has ordered.

Just as Christ taught the poor of his time to be obedient and content with their lowly lot, and to look for better things elsewhere than in this life, so the Churches have carried on his teaching to this day in preaching contentment to the masses. This may suit the ruling classes very well, but one can hardly blame the ruling classes for that; it just happens to be a big stroke of luck for them, and one that they will naturally make the most of. To be perfectly fair, we must remember that Christ also commended the rich man in his castle to observe certain duties towards the poor man at his gate; but that is a matter which is entirely up to the rich man himself to decide, and if he doesn't choose to observe them, then the poor man must be just as content to go without! His body may suffer, but his "soul" goes marching on to that greater glory.

We see, then, that just as Jesus accepted and taught acceptance of the social and economic order of his day, so the main tendency of Christian outlook and teaching in every age since has been to accept and teach acceptance of the *status quo* of its own particular time. As the social and economic order changes (through the pressure of a variety of causes), so the prevailing Christian teaching changes with it, but only to bring the same arguments to bear on the new phases that it formerly applied to the old. Only to condemn that which it formerly blessed, and to bless in its place that which it will as loudly condemn when out-moded at the next turn of the wheel.

This consistent, outstanding tendency to accept and sanctify each new *status quo*, and to minimize its faults and hardships by heading off social discontent towards a heavenly millenium, is a direct derivative of the teachings and spirit of Jesus, and is an inevitable consequence of the fundamental Christian beliefs. It is less important, therefore, to consider whether Christianity has upheld or opposed any specific phase of economic life, such as slavery, than to consider the underlying beliefs which determine that Christians will always take a certain line of thought, whatever the specific object to which it is applied. It is these underlying fundamental beliefs—that the law of God is above the law of man; that the body and its "estate" matters little in comparison with the "soul" and its eternal fate; that the happiness and joys and sorrows of this life are of no importance compared with the blessings of the "life everlasting," etc., etc.—which make it inevitable that Christian teaching as applied to this world will always tend to act as a brake on human and social progress, whatever the particular nature of the current social order. The argument is applied to each new phase in turn, but it remains fundamentally the same argument, because the fundamental beliefs remain the same. And if the fundamental beliefs don't remain the same, they are no longer Christian.

It was no new world vision that Christ brought, but a "vision" of another world. Only as that other disembodied world has become less real in men's belief and the vision begun to have blurred edges, have Christians turned back to this real world of flesh and blood human beings which they tried for so long to ignore and devalue. Only as the Christian spirit has shown more and more its bankruptcy have Christians turned more and more to the humanitarian spirit, and to the human joys and ideals which they had so long banished.

To-day the economic order is in ferment again, the

masses are demanding more and more of the opportunities and comforts of *this* life, here and now, with a fig for pulpit promises in the great there-and-then. And Christian thought prepares itself to go round with the wheel once more. The "rich man in his castle" stunt was all the go in England when the working classes were only just beginning to realize their power, but now that the working-man is becoming more powerful in his organizations, the churches are gradually beginning to realize that God doesn't require him to be quite as contented with his "estate" (or lack of it) as he used to be. God is in the process of changing his mind once more. We will examine some of the curious results in my next.

All the best for now.

Affectionately,

R. H. S. STANDEFAST

Mind, the Master

By "mind" here is meant that part of the human make-up which governs and controls the organism as a whole. Some there are—the Behaviorists, for instance—who hold that "mind," as it is usually thought of, is little more than a myth, that it is merely the sum-total of the reactions of the nervous system, or that it consists of reflex or automatic actions. And maybe the more deeply scientists concern themselves with the problem, the more firmly will they be able to establish their case. Maybe. We shall see. But for our present purpose we shall use the word "mind" in its generally-accepted sense.

WHERE WE GO WRONG

In our judgment of what other people say and do we are so often apt to overlook their origin and history, where we should, to be fair and reasonable, seek to know in the first place what were the circumstances attending their birth and training—especially their early training—and whence comes our standard of measurement of other folk and our own standard of conduct.

We are all, each and every one of us, born and brought up under conditions which are peculiar to ourselves—even two children born of the same parents are not subject to precisely the same set of life-conditions, because even if the conditions of their birth were somewhat similar (they cannot be identical) the children are bound to separate and meet with varying influences which help to mould their separate and individual characters—and every man jack of us is different from the rest in some way or the other: in our physical and/or mental make-up.

Two boys of the same stock, but born at different times, may vary considerably simply because, or rather partly because, at the time of their conception, or sometime during their prenatal life, the physical or mental or both physical and mental conditions of one or the other or both of their parents were not, on one occasion, what they were on the other occasion. Science makes that quite clear.

Twins may be as alike as "two peas in a pod," but just as the two peas differ from each other in some small way, so will the twins be dissimilar. No engineer, or any other workman in the world has ever been able to produce two things exactly alike, no matter what amount of skill is used in the attempt to do so; they may appear to the naked eye to be an exact pair, but a detailed and microscopic examination of them proves this to be wrong.

It is the same with two girls as with two boys: they differ to a greater or lesser degree according to

the influence at work at their birth and during their upbringing.

In other words we are—individually and collectively—the products of certain biologic forces, and we inherit long-standing social conditions, which together help to mould our characters and make us what we are. Of course, we ourselves assist in the process of our development in whatever line it may take, but we are either handicapped or helped by the natural and social forces prevailing at the outset.

MOTHER GRUNDY.

Let us take our old familiar friend, Mother Grundy. She is not to be blamed, really; she just can't help being what she is—a veritable nuisance, filled with a desire to put everyone else on the right path—her path—towards righteousness. She is just as much the product of her original envelopment and lifelong environment as any of the rest of us. She probably never had a chance; she was, it is safe to say, born of parents of much the same type, possibly in uncongenial surroundings, and when young her mind was stuffed with social filth. Actually she never had the opportunity to be better (for to begin with she couldn't help her parentage), to know better or to do better, and what she says and does is perfectly natural to her, all things considered. She is—as we all are, and as is, for instance, the Mayfair play-boy who gets into trouble, and upon whom we sit in judgment—the natural consequence of the events which led up to her entry into the world, and the life she has led while here.

There are, to be sure, busy-bodies and ne'er-do-wells in all walks of life, and both of the male and female species. They are not all born of poor parents and in humble surroundings. On the contrary: they are to be found from one end of the social scale to the other, and they are what they are because of the circumstances surrounding their birth, their social setting, and the matters which engage their time and attention as they go through life.

Those at the bottom of the scale, perhaps, haven't much chance of improvement; their habits are so ingrained and their mode of life so fixed and well-nigh unalterable that nothing but dynamite would move them. They are pretty well doomed to stay "put."

But with the others—or some of them, at least—things are not so difficult. If we have the will to do it (and we should never lose sight of the fact that we are all more-or-less tarred with the same brush) we can, by trying hard, be better than we are—be better human and social beings, that is. Admittedly it is not an easy task to empty the mind of its encumbrances and fill it with more palatable fare, but it can be done. Indeed, it is—rightly viewed—a social obligation so to furnish and instruct the mind that we conduct ourselves in such a way that the best interests of humanity as a whole are established and made secure.

WHAT ARE THE "BEST INTERESTS"?

And there's the rub! What *are* the "best interests"? Just because we have—speaking broadly—all been educated in a different way, no two people will give the same answer to that question—and what a monotonous world this would be if we all thought and acted alike! But it seems reasonable to suggest that if the truth were taught of the origin and history of the world, or rather this planet on which we live, the evolution of the human race and its customs—its beliefs and practices, *all* of them—a step would be taken in the right direction, especially if to teach aught else were made a penal offence.

And that, of course, implies that a man shall be

impressed with the fact that his actions are, to a much greater degree than he appreciates, the reflection of his thoughts—that his mind is the master of his ceremonies, so to speak—for which very good and sufficient reason he should see to it that his mind is properly furnished.

Suppose that such a state of affairs *did* come to pass? What then? Would the millenium suddenly dawn upon us? Not likely! Things do not happen just like that—not lasting human affairs anyway. Our prepossessions will always be tugging vigorously at our minds. We are all prone to cherish the idea that we *know* and (in spite of our professed thirst for knowledge!) we resent even a delicate hint to the contrary. But if we are not too stubborn we can at least be made conscious of what we *ought* to do, and that consciousness is in time bound to have its effect. . .

THE ESSENCE OF IT

There is many a one with an accommodating conscience—a man, that is, who can and does, for self-aggrandisement and public approval, adjust himself to any particular class, sect or creed, with whom, at the moment, he may be in contact. With him it is a question of expediency: what line of action will bring him the best results in return for his outward allegiance. This type, too, is to be found in all walks of life, and of all classes he is the most dangerous, the most *despicable*, inasmuch as he will, figuratively speaking, sell his soul for a mess of pottage and to curry favour.

Summarized, the position is this: mind—or consciousness, call it what we will, has expressed itself or found expression in a variety of ways, and, like any and every other product of evolution, it must be regarded as a thing of exceedingly slow growth. There is, however, this very important exception to be noted: mind is a thing of recent development in the human being—to put it another way: it was only yesterday as it were, that man became possessed of a “mind,” and therefore developed into a thoughtful being—and this latest acquisition of his, because of its flexibility and range, is capable of great possibilities for good or ill—a fact which is made unmistakably clear wherever we look and listen.

The human mind can express itself either as a cesspool of social filth or as a social illuminant, and between those two extremes there are all sorts, shapes and sizes and degrees of development. That is the essence of it all.

G. B. LISSENDEN

RUSKIN ON MIRACLES

I noticed a lengthy discussion in the newspapers a month or so ago, on the propriety of praying for, or against, rain. It had suddenly, it seems, occurred to the public mind, and to that of the gentlemen who write the theology of the breakfast-table, that rain was owing to natural causes; and that it must be unreasonable to expect God to supply on our immediate demand, what could not be provided, but by previous evaporation. I noticed further, that this alarming difficulty was at least softened to some of our Metropolitan congregations by the assurances of their ministers that, although since the last lecture by Professor Tyndall at the Royal Institution, it had become impossible to think of asking God for any temporal blessing, they might still hope their applications for spiritual advantages would occasionally be successful: thus implying that though material processes were necessarily slow, and the laws of Heaven respecting matter, inviolable, mental processes might be instantaneous, and mental laws at any moment disregarded by their Institutor: so that the spirit of a man might be brought to maturity in a moment, though the resources of Omnipotence would be overtaxed, or its consistency abandoned, in the endeavour to produce the same result on a greengage.

Correspondence

FINLAND AND DEMOCRACY

TO THE EDITOR OF THE “FREETHINKER”

SIR,—The *Freethinker* is usually such a bracing tonic after the sickly dope of the gramophone press, but last week I am afraid it fell down over the Soviet-Finnish affair.

Your statement that Finland is “as real a democracy as any that exists” is incorrect, and the fact of which is, I consider, the key to the situation.

Baron Mannerheim, head of the Army, is about as democratic as “Christian” General Franco—and for the same reasons. In 1918 he imported German Armies and overthrew the Finnish Socialist Government with abominable cruelty; the *Times* of February, 1919, reported that of 80,000 “Red” prisoners, 30,000 men and women, were killed. So great was public outcry that Mannerheim was refused entry into Britain.

Since that day “order” has been kept by assassinations, kidnappings (e.g., the Presidential Liberal candidate, Stalberg, was kidnapped in 1931), bribery, mock trials (e.g., the working-class leader, Toivo Antikoinen, was sentenced to eight years’ imprisonment in 1934 for being a Communist, and in 1936 to life imprisonment for the alleged murder of a White Guard in 1922), brute force (e.g., Trade Unions have constantly been suppressed, and the 23 Communist Deputies elected in 1929 were expelled under pressure from the big business Lappo Fascists who used the slogan, “Religion and Homeland”), bannings and fines (e.g., the banning of the newspaper, *Suomen Pienviikeli*, the forced suspension of *Soihtu*, and the forced change in opinions of the Liberal *Tulenkantajat* last month).

Consequently, at the time of writing, most Finnish territory is being ruled by men with very strong pro-Fascist leanings and assassinations, and the conditions of the workers are very poor, there being no unemployment insurance, nor old age and sickness pensions, and the wage-rates being approximately half of those in the other Scandinavian countries.

With regard to the “Red atrocity,” stories and photographs allegedly emanating from Finland, it certainly does not require a Military Expert to tell that they by no means hold water. For example, while the *Daily Express* was speaking of hundreds being killed in “blazing Helsinki,” all that the *Times* correspondent could report was that the Russians “scored some hits.”

The accusation of being a paper controlled by the money-bags of the City cannot be levelled against the *Freethinker*, so one can only assume that your erroneous references to Finland were due to ignorance of the facts.

CHRISTOPHER BRUNEL

REJOINDER TO THE ABOVE

MR. BRUNEL takes exception to my description of Finland being “as real a democracy as any that exists.” I would be quite willing to revise this as “being on the way to becoming a real democracy,” but I am afraid that would not do, for my real offence probably lies deeper—that of lacking obedience to Stalin, which alone accounts for the fact that so many of those who were shrieking for war turned the other way about when Hitler and Stalin formally joined hands.

I do not, by the way blame Russia for trying to make itself proof against attack via the Baltic. That is the game all nations have played so far as they could, and none more successfully than our own. But I do not find myself of so pliant a nature as to think that what is blameworthy in Great Britain is admirable in Russia. Nor do I find myself able, having always opposed the Hitler method of discovering that a people are unfit for self-government whenever another power pleases to play the part of judge and executioner, to use it as an excuse for copying the policy taught by Hitler with regard to Austria, Czechoslovakia and Poland.

Mr. Brunel’s misleading presentation of the facts with regard to Finland and its Communists do not specially concern me, but a brief summary is necessary. Until

1917 Finland was a Russian possession. In 1906, following the war with Japan, the Finns declared a general strike, which was so far successful that it managed to frame a genuinely democratic constitution. There was proportionate representation and a vote for every one without distinction of sex. In 1907 the Social Democrats received 40 per cent of the votes. This reform was soon suppressed by Russia.

In 1917, with Russia in Revolution, Finland declared its independence. There was a conflict between the Communists in Finland, Russia helping them, and Germany helping their opponents. There is great dispute as to what actually took place, each side painting the other black, as is usual in such conflicts. In a brief time the internal conflict ended, a special law expelled the Communists, as a party, from the Diet, on the grounds of plotting to give a foreign nation power in Finland. Mr. Brunel mentions the fact without the reason.

There is no strong Trade-Union movement in Finland, but there are nearly a hundred thousand members, and there is a large and powerful Co-operative movement. The Finns have a forty-seven hour week with paid holidays. From being a very illiterate people there is now less than one per cent not able to read and write. Mr. H. Jackson, whose book on Finland, occupies an authoritative position, says that the public libraries are of a very high standard, "and the equipment of public libraries is something to make eyes used to the impoverished institutions of most English country towns open with wonder." Sir E. D. Simon, whose excellent little book, based on personal study, published by the "Left Book Club" (I have taken most of my statements from this book, but only after having verified them in others, so far as was possible) says that "living in a town in Finland is vastly different from living in a typical industrial city in England. There are no slums, there is no dirt."

The Finnish Diet consists of 198 members. In the Diet of 1929 (after this date Communists were not allowed to stand for election on the ground noted) there were 23 Communists elected. From 1919 to 1936 there have been six elections. The number of Social Democrats elected were 80-53-66-78-83. Counting the combined number of Social Democrats, Liberals, and (small) farmers elected in these six elections they stand 148-118-126-136-142-141. A Left Wing Government was formed, after the last election, of Socialists, Agriculturalists, and Liberals. That is the Government now in power. It should be said that Communists are not expelled the country. They may not form a party, on the ground that the intention is to overthrow the State by violence. But 141 Social Democrats, Liberals and small farmers hardly justifies the assumption of it being anti-democratic.

There are 285,000 separate farms, and 216,000 of these are worked by the people who own them. Large fortunes are not common in Finland. It is a poor country, except in ideals and determination. The farms are nearly all of small acreage.

Mr. Brunel should paint with more than one colour. It is true that wages are lower than, say, Sweden. But it should also have been stated that the cost of living is much lower also, and "there is a fairly good system of poor relief." It is bad advocacy to suppress facts. They have an awkward habit of turning up when least wanted. It is also true that, as Mr. Brunel faithfully reports, there is no old-age pension scheme. Mr. Brunel is here quite right, but it would have been wise to record the fact that an Old Age Pension Act has been passed and will come into force in a few months.

There is no evidence whatever that the expulsion of the Communists in 1930 was brought about by "big business." Look at the Constitution of the Diet. Would a majority of Social Democrats and Farmers be likely to be ruled by "big business"? "Big business" is responsible for many crimes, but it is very stupid indeed to make it responsible for everything that is objectionable. I ought also to say that I am concerned with what Finland is now, and therefore do not traverse all Mr. Brunel's implication, as I might have done.

I think it should be said, as should be obvious, that in a Finnish Election the voter's choice is not restricted to different members of the same party. That kind of an

election is only one step removed from farcical. Nor do I think anyone who is capable of impartiality will find anything but amusement in the statement that Finland is threatening Russia, and so began the war. That is even more stupid than to attribute everything to "big business."

My apologies to readers for taking up so much space, but one cannot answer a number of points in the same space that it takes to state them.

C.C.

SHAKESPEARE AND DE VÈRE

SIR,—No one would have suspected from the way in which Mr. A. W. Davis sent me to John M. Robertson for the antidote to Bacon (though I distinctly showed I was no Baconian) that Robertson was a "disintegrator" himself. In other words, he spent many years of his life trying to prove that W. Shakespeare of Stratford did not write some of the plays attributed to W. Shakespeare of Stratford, nor many parts, both great and small, of other plays. In fact, Robertson was both a "dethroner" of Shakespeare and one of those "miserable scribblers" so scathingly denounced by Mimmernus. The only thing to his credit in Mr. Davis's eyes was that he declared Bacon had no hand in the plays—other writers, yes, but not Bacon. So he is looked upon with a little more favour by the orthodox.

Mr. Davis, however, can stand anything but Bacon, and is so obsessed with Bacon that he simply will not allow me to be altogether Oxfordian (though I said I was no Baconian). I *must* have a hankering after "Baconism." My answer is to ask him not to write nonsense.

I cannot ever hope to emulate Mr. Irving in hysterical personalities, so will allow him to wallow in them to the full. But I can quite understand he did not like my exposure of his astonishing chronological ignorance which he had to apologize for as "a passing observation." (It was nothing of the kind.) He now adds that Shakespeare had "arrived" as "a playwright and poet before Oxford was forty years of age." That is, that W. Shakespeare of Stratford was known as a playwright and poet before 1590. This is just balderdash. "The first heir of my invention" appeared in 1593. As for Shakespeare's knowledge of law it staggered Lord Chief Justice Campbell, Malone, Steevens, Grant White, Rushton, Mr. Castle, K.C., and Sir George Greenwood, K.C. But Mr. Irving finds no difficulties there whatever. Shakespeare just "easily visited courts of justice." What fools these eminent Shakespearean scholars and lawyers must be!

The consummate "stage-craft" found in the plays is another of Mr. Irving's proofs of the Stratford authorship. But most readers know, I hope, that the Earl of Oxford's "Players" were a popular and busy theatrical company; and that Oxford wrote plays for them is vouched for by contemporary evidence, some of which claimed for Oxford as the greatest writer of comedy "among us." He was quite able to write Hamlet's advice to the players and show the "stage-craft" in the plays.

Finally, we are told that "the later plays were written after Oxford's death." We are not told which plays nor the date when they were written, nor given the necessary evidence for the statement. The truth is—and it is uncontrovertible—as the author of *Shakespeare Identified* says, "We have a flood of Shakespearean plays being published authentically right up to the year before the death of Edward de Vere, then a sudden stop, and nothing more published with any appearance of proper authorization for nearly twenty years, although the reputed author was alive and active during twelve of these years." On the rock of chronology the case for Oxford is invincible.

H. CUTNER

RE NATURE OR NURTURE

SIR,—I did not commence this correspondence with any idea of starting a discussion of the subject; but merely to show that there was another side to the question which I considered Mr. Taylor did not, and I suspected would not, give the prominence which I thought

due to it. I sent my letter before the articles were complete, with the object, if possible, of avoiding a controversy; but as Mr. Taylor has so kindly offered to lend me books, courtesy demands a reply. As I have at my disposal a fairly well-stocked private library, and have access to one of the largest Public Reference Libraries out of London, I do not need to avail myself of his generous offer.

As I am writing, perhaps you will allow me a few further remarks on the subject of the "Inheritance of Intelligence," by Homo Sapiens, in answer to Mr. Taylor's letter; and I am well aware that the relative efforts of "Nature and Nurture," cannot be adequately reviewed in four articles in the *Freethinker*.

I would first point out that when I quote the names of "authorities" (a word I heartily dislike), it is with two objects:—

1. The author quoted expresses my opinion better than I could myself (mental laziness is probably a factor here).

2. I wish to avoid giving my reader the impression that the data quoted are due to my own researches into the subject.

Now, owing to the difficulty of looking at Human Behaviour and related problems with real objectivity—a difficulty, which no doubt Prof. J. B. S. Haldane and Prof. L. Hogben appreciate equally with Mr. G. H. Taylor—some other instrument is necessary besides verbal logic. I, as well as others, find this instrument in the comparatively new branch of Mathematics known as "Statistical Analysis," with its Significance Tests, Correlation Factors, Frequency Curves, etc.

When the mass of data gathered on the question of the "Inheritance of Human Intelligence" is subjected to this analysis, much of it is not of any value for the purpose for which it is used, and the rest of very little significance. "Significance" here used in the Statistical sense.

Again, when one reviews the work done over the last decade in Biochemistry, one wonders if there is any such "thing" as "Heredity," as at present understood, and I am of the opinion that at some future date, much, if not all of what to-day we look upon as being due to Heredity will be interpreted in terms of Chemical Environment of the developing organism. The use of the word "Heredity," like the word "Vitalism," is coming to be used to disguise a gap in knowledge.

In conclusion, to revert to Mr. G. H. Taylor's articles; I cannot make the opinion attributed by Mr. Taylor to Prof. J. B. S. Haldane, in the last sentence of the last paragraph but two in the *Freethinker* for November 19, 1939, bottom of page 742 column 1, tally with that over the name of Prof. Haldane and others in *Nature* for September 16, 1939, page 521, which states: "For the effective genetic improvement of mankind is dependent upon major changes in social conditions and correlative changes in human attitudes. In the first place, there can be no valid basis for estimating and comparing the intrinsic worth of different individuals without economic and social conditions which provide approximately equal opportunities for all members of society instead of stratifying them from birth into classes with widely different privileges."

ALBERT R. THORNEWELL

WAR AIMS

SIR,—Your comment that "we must make it plain to the world that we are ready to submit all national disputes to an independent internationally constituted tribunal armed with power to enforce its decisions," presupposes an armed force. And is the law between nations the same as that between individuals where enforcement is concerned? You say that it can be justified.

I cannot do better than quote the arguments used by Aldous Huxley against these doctrines (pp. 112-3 *Ends and Means*, Chatto and Windus).

"Police action against an individual criminal is radically different from action by a nation of group of nations against a national criminal. The police act with a maximum of precision; they go out and arrest the guilty person. Nations and groups of nations act through their armed forces, which can only act with a maximum

of imprecision. Killing, maiming, starving and ruining millions of human beings. The process . . . described as punishing a guilty nation consists in mangling and murdering innumerable innocent individuals." Mr. Huxley describes this as an International Massacre—Force and says that "it seems almost infinitely improbable that it ever will exist." He puts the following pointed questions:—

"How is such a force to be recruited, how officered? how armed? where located? who is to decide when it is to be used and against whom? To whom will it owe allegiance, and how is its loyalty to be guaranteed? Is it likely that the staff officers of the various nations will draw up plans for the invasion and conquest of their own country? or that aviators will loyally co-operate in the slaughter of their own people? etc., etc." He then goes on to elaborate his point that the business of the League of Nations is to concentrate all its energies on the work of preventing wars from breaking out, for, he adds, "War cannot be stopped by more war."

S. GORDON HOGG

National Secular Society

REPORT OF EXECUTIVE MEETING HELD DECEMBER 17, 1939

THE President, Mr. Chapman Cohen, in the chair.

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

Minutes of previous meeting read and accepted. Monthly Financial Statement presented. New members were admitted to Liverpool, Glasgow, North London Branches, and the Parent Society.

Matters concerning two wills in which the Society is interested were discussed and decisions made. Interference with the selling of literature at meetings of the Southend Branch was further reported together with the action being taken by the Executive.

The first notice for the Conference in 1940 was ordered to be circulated to Branches.

A number of minor items were dealt with. The next meeting of the Executive was fixed for January 28, 1940, and the proceedings closed.

R. H. ROSETTI,

General Secretary

Twenty Five Years Ago

THE British public who buy Christmas cards this year will notice that the Prince of Peace has been ousted by the soldier in khaki, for on a very large number of these articles of stationery warlike figures and verses have usurped the customary pacific figures. What an elastic religion is Christianity? When the god is changed from Christ to Mars, the worshippers do not seem to mind in the least.

SUNDAY LECTURE NOTICES, Etc.

LONDON

INDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH (Cricketers' Arms, Inverness Street, near Camden Town Underground Station): No Lecture.

OUTDOOR

NORTH LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (White Stone Pond, Hampstead): 11.30. Parliament Hill Fields, 3.30, Mr. L. Ebury.

WEST LONDON BRANCH N.S.S. (Hyde Park): 12 noon until 6 p.m. Various Speakers.

COUNTRY

INDOOR

LIVERPOOL BRANCH N.S.S. (Transport Hall, Islington, Liverpool): 7.0, Mr. O. T. Owen—A Lecture.

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