

# THE FREETHINKER

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

## Views and Opinions

### Past and Present

I AM not greatly interested in the question of whether Shakespeare wrote the plays that are attributed to him, or whether, for some reason almost as wonderful as the plays themselves, these were written by someone who carefully concealed his identity. I have always cared more about the plays than their author, and the heat displaced in the controversy only amused me. Moreover the greatest lovers of the plays I have come across were not those who appeared to be vitally interested in whether “Shakespeare” was a mask or a reality. Often, too, I noted these critics cancelled each other. As a young man, two of my favourite authors were Laurence Sterne and Robert Burton. And then I came across a book published in the early years of the nineteenth century, I think, proving that Sterne took a deal of his *Sentimental Journey*, from Burton’s *Anatomy of Melancholy*. It left me quite undisturbed. If the allegations were sound they proved only, as Lamb said, that some authors are damned good to steal from. I merely thought that Sterne showed rather good judgment, and provided the borrowing was not done with evil intent, or to deceive, there seemed nothing to worry about. Sterne certainly showed good taste when he borrowed from Burton. I have read many of these books about Shakespeare with interest because I like a good detective yarn, and I like to see the villain of the piece being tracked down, only to find in the case of Shakespeare, that the “villain” appeared to be of a very elusive character. At most the verdict was of the Scottish variety, “Not Proven.” These literary detective stories passed the time very pleasantly, and much of it passed with the time.

But I see there has been given a performance of *Julius Cæsar* in modern dress and with modern accessories, and that is quite another matter. It opens up a rather important issue. A picture in one of the daily papers shows a man dressed in a Chicago gangster’s outfit firing a revolver—presumably at *Cæsar* whom one cannot see, but who is probably just getting out of a motor-car, or entering a ’phone box,

to remind Calpurnia of something he wants for supper. And when dying I expect Cæsar cries to Brutus “You double crosser!”

\* \* \*

### Atmosphere and History

I think this is all wrong. A play, like a novel, should suggest atmosphere. And history is not completely understandable without atmosphere, particularly when the scene of action is removed from us by nearly two thousand years. It is true that if we translate the statesmen of antiquity in terms of to-day, or take the financiers of ancient Rome and place them in the centre of financial London to-day, we shall find the same mean tricks and lies and betrayals and nobilities and generosities and honest actions that we find constantly recurring in human affairs. But all the same we should miss the situations and conditions and beliefs and aspirations in the *form* in which they then operated. We should see the same motives and the same qualities of human nature at work, but we should never learn the immediate incitations to action, the recognition of which constitutes an understanding of history. I should go to see *Julius Cæsar*, with Brutus dressed in a rain-coat and firing a machine-gun at the Romans, if I felt a need of a laugh, but I should miss a knowledge of the particular conditions that gave rise to the manifestations of human motives that while constant in their operation are yet coloured by the circumstances belonging to a particular period. You do not recreate history or develop a sense of historic continuity by using modern language, or current idioms, although you may by so doing illustrate the fact that human passions remain the same generation after generation, and for those who have imagination enough, the play already provides that lesson. Indeed, if it did not, if every play did not, one would not understand it at all. In the worst sense of the word a modernized Shakespearean play is a vulgarization of life.

It is easily possible, for example, to take the New Testament, convert its characters into men of the present time and to show how they would act in modern life substantially as they acted a couple of thousand years ago. But one would miss an understanding of the power of sheer superstition in societies of a past age. To-day the man who goes round with a banner proclaiming the end of the world, and threatening with eternal damnation everyone who does not believe, excites pity or derision, and may, if he becomes troublesome, run some risk of being confined as not mentally capable of looking after himself. Two thousand years ago he might have earned the veneration of a God, and even centuries later become the accepted representative of the deity. Leave out the superstitions of Calvin, or Luther, or Knox, and their character becomes an insoluble enigma. You must, at least in imagination, recreate the past if it is to be thoroughly understood.

### The Continuity of Human Nature—

I expect that they who are responsible for this use of a modern atmosphere for the presentation of ancient life would retort that the permanency of motive and of identity in diversity is the only way to understand human evolution. In a general sense I agree, and have very frequently stressed the fact. The love of man for woman, of parent for child, the loyalty of friend to friend, the exhibition of a mean or lofty character, the struggle for wealth, for distinction, for power, were the same in ancient Rome as they are to-day. Every human passion that is exhibited now was exhibited then. Shylock's protest "Hath not a Jew eyes," etc., may be read here with the substitution of "Man" for "Jew." Human nature, as I have so often insisted, remains fundamentally the same. It is on that basis only that the past is understandable and the future predictable.

But we can utilize this knowledge of human nature with profit only when we combine along with this fundamental unity of human faculty the complementary truth that human nature is always subject to modification. In that fact lies the understanding of social development. Greed remains greed in all circumstances, but the direction of greed, the things for which it craves and the means adopted to secure gratification is determined by prevailing social conditions. The modern financial group that corners corn or copper, or any other commodity that is in demand, and then holds the world to ransom, is only a contemporary form of the robber lord who sallied forth from his castle and held all he could to ransom, or subjected people to pillage. As Ruskin put it, the "crag baron" becomes the "bag baron"; the same qualities are involved in both cases, and what was yesterday gained at the point of the sword is to-day gained through the medium of large bank balances. Brains may become as great a menace as brawn did a few centuries ago. The man seeking a bride and dragging a woman to his tent or cave, and the modern young man "sighing like furnace" for the maid of his desire, taking her to a theatre and feeding her on expensive chocolates, are exhibiting different forms of the same passion. The politician hungry for power will at one stage of social development secure it by raising a gang of armed followers. At another stage the same type of politician achieves his aim by pandering to the ignorance and prejudices of the greatest number of voters. It is the same human nature throughout, manifesting the same qualities on different levels.

\* \* \*

### With a Difference

That last sentence, as an American does *not* normally say, any more than the ordinary Englishman commences a sentence with "blimey," spills a mouthful. I remember, when I first read some of Swedenborg's writings, being much attracted by his saying that human progress resembled an ascending spiral in which the same phases were repeated, but on different levels. If my memory serves me, he thought of it as a continuous progress, but that is not correct. Man may move upwards or downwards, although I think it is mainly upward, but there is no "law" that determines the movement shall be always in one direction. Europe has had, for instance, one "Dark Age," and it now stands in danger of another. But it is true that the same features can be detected on different levels of social existence. The important feature is that as civilization advances man becomes aware of the conditions that determine movement in one direction or another, and many work accordingly.

A marked feature of this is the growing ascendancy of the psychological factor over the purely biological. That is the great and vital distinction between human

and animal society. Animal society is almost entirely biological. The advance is by biological heredity, and apart from biological variation the animal commences where its parents did. And human society differentiates from animal society, mainly through the instrument of language, by the use of tools, and by a social heredity that transmits the discoveries and inventions of one generation to the next; there is also the creation of ideals—good or bad—and their transmission in the shape of institutions and definite teaching. To recur to a previous illustration. The attraction of man to woman and woman to man is fundamentally the same always. It is the mere attraction of the male for the female of the species and vice versa. But with the development of human life, in even its earlier stages, we can note the factors other than biological that are operating. A woman falls in love with a man or a man with a woman because she or he admires certain qualities that their opposite number possesses, and this operates so powerfully that, granting the normal conditions of civilized life, the later factor actually overrides the primitive one. In other words, we are seeing the transmission of a particular constant in human nature lifted from a lower to a higher level. The psychological factor determines the mode in which the purely biological one shall operate, unless the conditions are such that life is reduced to a lower level.

\* \* \*

### Re-creation, not Transformation

I have been permitting myself to run on, giving my typewriter the rein and merely watching where it will lead me, but I think that what it has produced is germane to the topic with which I began. This is the folly of producing a play dealing with ancient Rome as though it occurred last week in a modern city. Doing so may illustrate the fact that human nature is always the same, but it leaves out of sight the other consideration, without which the first is of little value, that human nature is also the most pliable of things. And I think that lesson can be better gained by seeing *Julius Cæsar* played in as near a particular atmosphere that no longer exists as we can get. To present the play as though human conditions are the same now as they were then is to mislead the unwary. The part played by the soothsayer, for example, is not quite the same that a fortune-teller of to-day plays in our own society, or in the sermons of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and we must, therefore, give to a particular form of superstition a different value in life as it was then and as it is now. Our job should be in the theatre to recreate the past as well as we can, but not to transform it. That is a form of idealism practised by many from motives that are far from admirable. It is a mistake that Shakespeare never made—witness his recreation of Shylock and the change in his redrafting of the play—and one sees the folly of "improving" such an author. At least it is a danger that is apt to recoil on the experimenter.

CHAPMAN COHEN

### Recherche des Iles des Lotophages

WE, seeking peaceful lives and quiet graves,  
Across long leagues of foam direct our barque;  
Far, far away, amidst the sapphire waves,  
Our long-sought isle awaits us ere the dark.

We to its wharves one day shall moor our ship,  
When, by fair winds, we shall make this landfall;  
Then from our hearts will care and sorrow slip;  
On that bright coast dwells sorrow not at all.

On Life and Death we had great argument;  
They are but words and patterns in the air;  
In future will our time be better spent  
Beholding sun, and sea, and nature fair.

BAYARD SIMMONS

## Cranky Creeds and Modern Movements

IN the eighteenth century, Voltaire, who knew England well, reproached us, smilingly, with possessing "a hundred religions and only one sauce." He could scarcely have envisaged the increased number of sects that we have to-day. They range from Anglo-Catholics to Anabaptists, Methodists to Muggletonians, Lutherans to Latter Day Saints; and include Peculiar People and Presbyterians, Spiritualists, Christadelphians, Four-Square Gospellers, Swedenborgians, Christian Scientists, and many others too numerous to mention. Even so, the Americans outrange us with the number and eccentricity of their religious beliefs.

This multiplicity of fancy religions is a peculiarity of Anglo-Saxon countries. The countrymen of Voltaire and other Latin Europeans, have a more direct approach to theology. The religiously-minded Englishman, for example, becomes dissatisfied with the Church of England, and joins a Nonconformist body. Should that fail him, he will, in all probability, migrate to one of the many fancy religions. Having started his pious pilgrimage in a recognized place of worship he is likely to finish in a tin-tabernacle, or mission-tent, with half-a-dozen girl-friends and a second-hand harmonium.

All along the Mediterranean this proceeding would be regarded as pious eccentricity, to say the least. The Latin peoples, particularly, are either members of their old-established churches, or they are outside the fold altogether. That there are a few French Protestants does not affect the issue. In Roman Catholic countries the man who is not a Catholic is a Free-thinker, or indifferent to religion. Frenchmen do not get enthusiastic concerning the alleged association of the Ten Tribes of Israel with their own country, or try to read *The Book of Mormon* with becoming reverence as an oracle of wisdom.

This Anglo-Saxon outlook of intellectual timidity is expressed at its best in Cardinal Newman's *Apolo-gia*, and at its worst in countless volumes that cumber the second-hand booksellers' "fourpenny" boxes, and get torn to pieces in the process. Newman, despite his scholarship, and beautiful command of language, is obsessed with theological tweedledum and tweedledee which in a lesser man would be just splitting hairs and chopping straws.

G. K. Chesterton, who was a keen critic in his playful way, always maintained that the average, as distinguished from the pious, Englishman was at heart a Pagan. Certainly, John Bull's increasing indifference to religion may be the actual cause of his latter-day toleration. There is a certain coolness in English blood which prevents such happenings in our midst as the St. Bartholomew massacre, and the long and sanguinary reign of the "Holy" Inquisition. And John's sturdy individuality may be also a very important factor in the growth of new sects and movements:—

For forms of faith let graceless zealots fight,  
He can't be wrong whose life is in the right.

John Bull's philanthropy is at once the wonder and despair of the rest of the world, for each year he spends the revenue of a small state on "reaching for the moon."

After all is said and done, it is the movements, and not the religious creeds, that count for sanity in the long run. The nineteenth century in England produced an outbreak of philanthropy that was truly amazing. Precisely as John Bull ceased to worry

about his soul—even doubted whether he had a soul at all—he began to try and redress social wrongs. The Anti-Slavery Movement, and so many other beneficent activities, were largely the work of philosophical Radicals, who did good because they recognized that such good was wisdom in the scorn of consequence. The Chartist and the Co-operative movements were followed by the Freethought agitation which culminated in a national society. The Trade Union movement, and societies for reforming so many social evils, belong to this period, which, with all its faults, was the theatre of the awakening of the working classes.

To-day we think little of the agitation against the drink traffic, and the failure of Prohibition in the United States of America has helped to increase this indifference. Yet good work was done by the despised teetotallers. For drunkenness was a terrible social evil as late as the last decades of the nineteenth century, and still is in certain circles of high society and its imitators. Better education and the resultant greater refinement have since played their parts, and this nation is saner and more sober, thanks to the social crusaders.

Indeed, these numerous necessary reforms could never have been carried out at all if it had not been for the enthusiasts, who found the lot of the pioneer a very hard one. The early advocates of trade unions were imprisoned. Even people of the importance of Elizabeth Fry and Robert Owen, with all the advantages of social position, had to fight hard and endure much for the cause of helping their fellows. The nation owes no deeper debt than that due to the great social reformers, who have given unostentatiously and without reward the devotion of their lives to trying to perfect the defects of our boasted civilization. And though their labours have been confined largely to the intellectual and material fabric of society, they have done much more than the mere vendors of so-called "spiritual" gifts. For the dreamers of one day are the prophets of the morrow, whilst religion tends to reaction and stereotype.

Why is it that such benevolent movements are so rare in Roman Catholic countries? One contributing factor is the suppression of liberalizing literature, which is a rule with the Roman Church. Take the case of Mrs. Despard, one of the most famous leaders of the Woman Suffrage movement. She was a member of the Roman Catholic Church, but it was the surreptitious reading of Shelley's Atheistical poetry, when she was a girl, that first filled her with the sense of the sorrow and injustice of life. "I could not see people in the same light any more," she said. "I shut myself up in my room with fierce thoughts and indignant dreams. What deeds were desperate enough in the face of so much senseless wrong?"

It was no idle passing phase of emotionalism. That reading of Shelley's verse made Mrs. Despard devote her life to lightening the sorrows of others. Shelley, with the intuition of genius, realized his own power when he said "Poets are the unacknowledged legislators of the world." They help to light the torch of progress, which, flamed over a country, will, in the long run, help to clear up the confusions and contradictions of our over-rated civilization. As for the pioneers themselves, like Wordsworth's "Happy Warrior," they

find comfort in himself and in his cause.

When the sword at length drops from their tired hands they have the proud assurance that they have served and saved the Cause of Human Liberation, than which there is none other finer and nobler. Truly, as Shakespeare said, "Spirits are not finely touched, but to fine issues."

## The Records and Religion of Old Nile

THE memorials of ancient Egypt restored to light by the archaeologist's research are still to be numbered among the marvels of the world. Deeply buried in the sands, as most of them were, the magnificence they and their treasures disclose of a departed civilization was almost undreamed of little more than a century ago.

The Assyrians and Babylonians inscribed their annals, astronomical observations, sacerdotal customs and social activities on brick and stone, a method not altogether unknown in the Land of the Nile, as the Tel-el-Armana tablets tell us; still, almost invariably, the old-time Egyptians employed another and much more convenient contrivance when recording events or conducting correspondence.

A plant botanically classified as *Cyperus papyrus* long ago flourished along the banks of the River Nile, although it no longer grows in Egypt, but grows luxuriantly in the Soudan. This water-reed was utilized from the remotest times in Egypt as writing material, and papyrus became so closely associated with calligraphy that the term we use for writing and printing material—paper—is directly derived from the Latin word *papyrus*. The period when papyrus was first utilized as a writing medium is conjectural, but specimens are now stored in museums which date back several thousand years before our era.

Papyrus was prepared from the reed's pith, and long strips of this were extracted and placed side by side. More strips were added and the whole firmly pressed together until complete sheets of varying dimensions were formed.

In his instructive *Romance of Archaeology* (Sampson Low), Mr. W. H. Bolton mentions a papyrus manuscript in the British Museum which reaches 35 feet in length, while some even larger have been found. He remarks that: "On this material ink forms were impressed by means of a brush or reed; the ink being prepared by dissolving various mineral and vegetable substances in water mixed with gum arabic."

Magical potency resided in the written characters, and it appears to have been a popular native custom to inscribe on papyrus anything one wished to memorize, and then wash away the writing in Egyptian beer, which was then imbibed, thus making the inscription part of oneself. In any case, one could afterwards associate in memory the pleasure of beer drinking with the recorded event.

Knowledge of names plays an important part in the customs and beliefs of many peoples. To learn a previously unknown name gives the recipient power over the person or thing designated. Thus, when the goddess Isis wished to obtain Ra's name, she fashioned a sacred serpent which bit the sun-god so severely that he cried with pain. Then Isis requested Ra to reveal his name for if she knew his name, she said, she could deliver him from his affliction. After refusal Ra at last disclosed his name, with which she now addressed him: "Let Ra live and let the poison die." Also in ancient Israel the name of the Hebrew divinity was too sacred for utterance.

The most ancient papyrus so far discovered probably dates back 5,000 years, while inscriptions on ebony may be safely assigned to the remote First Dynasty. The great antiquity of writing is also illustrated by the roll of papyrus depicted as one of the hieroglyphical signs.

Until the retinue of *savants* who accompanied Napoleon on his Egyptian expedition realized the import-

ance of papyrus, no one attached any value to them. Even when the papyrus rolls were deciphered by Young and Champollion, many travellers still treated them as mere curios and, unfortunately, the careless handling of these priceless documents by pioneer excavators and the many destroyed by the ignorant peasantry are now matters for the deepest regret. Yet, these memorials survived in such boundless profusion that sufficient have already been deciphered to enable Egyptologists to fairly reconstruct the history and social structure of ancient times.

Contemporary excavators who all conduct their inquiries on scientific principles have recovered most of their papyrus rolls from refuse dumps on city sites where they were cast away long centuries since. The ancient Egyptians, possibly because it would have been an act of desecration, never flung their discarded papyrus into the flames, but merely consigned them to the dust mound. Many of these were torn to tatters previously, but patiently pieced together they are frequently found of considerable interest and value to the modern investigator.

Tomb robberies seem to have been extremely common in Egypt, despite the sanctity attached to the resting places of the dead. Commenting on the various documents relating to the breaking into and pillaging of burial vaults, Boulton states: "The documents show clearly enough that there was good reason for the frantic measures that were adopted in transferring the bodies of royal personages and others from one tomb to another; evidently nothing but drastic measures of some kind could suffice to protect the mummies of even the greatest Pharaohs from the indignity of being robbed and injured." Indeed, recent research has shown that many, if not most, of the majestic sepulchral monuments of the past have been entered and ransacked by thieves searching for jewels and other valuable forms of portable property of a cashable character. It is also noteworthy that these depredations when conducted on an extensive scale were apt to occur during periods of social unrest.

Fiction, folk-lore, and verse of distinction are all recorded on papyrus and the Egyptian Tale of the Two Brothers has long been regarded as the original of the Bible story of Joseph and Potifer's salacious spouse. But the secular aspect of life is completely eclipsed by the spiritual literature which has survived in abundance and the celebrated Book of the Dead throws a flood of light on the hopes and fears of the ancient Nile dwellers when they meditated over the post-mortem existence.

For a prolonged period it was customary to provide the mummy with pious texts to render assistance in the journey to the Egyptian paradise. The path to salvation was beset with perilous pitfalls and the knowledge of magical terms that could be recited at the proper place and time was indispensable. The mummy was also furnished with food and drink, and it was imperative that it should possess written instructions to aid it in surmounting the many obstacles in its path, and ultimately obtain a passport to paradise when it appeared before the Judgment Seat of Osiris, who saved or damned the suppliant. These sacred texts comprise spells, words conveying power, prayers, hymns, incantations and others. These were inscribed on the walls of the sepulchre in the Pyramid period; at a later time they were placed on the coffin as well, while later still they were written on papyrus entombed with the departed. All the interesting texts form part of the Book of the Dead.

When the dead were admitted to the presence of Osiris, that great god was attended by 42 assessors. The man on trial then assures the assembly that he knows the name of the deity and those of his assist-

ants. Thus, it is surmised, this knowledge enables him to cast a spell over them. The departed then recites a series of negative confessions such as: "I have committed no murder. I have not stolen milk from the mouths of little children." The suppliant for mercy then three times reiterates the phrase, "I am pure. I am pure."

After the dead Egyptian's concluding utterance comes the judgment. From the texts, and even more from the drawings, this illustrating the scene before the throne of Osiris, has been reconstructed. In his *Religion in Essence and Manifestation* (Allen and Unwin, 1938, 25s.), Professor Van der Leeuw thus depicts the trial: "A monster, a sort of Cerberus, sits before the throne of Osiris, in front a crocodile, behind a rhinoceros, and in the middle a lion; this will devour the departed if the god's assembly condemns him. In the centre of the Hall of Truth there is a balance in which the dead man's heart is weighed; the god Anubis is 'master of the scales' and Thoth clerk of the court, while the judges are at the same time the executioners holding knives in their hands. The dead person who has been acquitted is 'justified'; that is, originally, 'his voice has prevailed'; he has recited the incantations in a correct manner." Then the acquitted is presented with the Crown of Justification by the divinity.

The abode of bliss and its antithesis the place of torment and despair have played an important part in many uncouth cults. And in Van der Leeuw's volume are the original verses and a fine prose rendering of the French Villon's fifteenth century picture of his Christian mother's pious reflexions: "I am a poor old woman, too ignorant to read a single letter. In the parish church I see paradise painted with its harps and lutes and Hell where the damned are being boiled. The one terrifies me, but the other gladdens and rejoices me."

The modern title the *Book of the Dead*, has no Egyptian justification. French Egyptologists termed the texts *Le Livre des Morts*, of which, of course, our Book of the Dead is a literal rendering. The designation seems to have originated from the fact that the native and Arab spoilers of the tombs called the papyri they collected from the mummies the native equivalent of *The Book of the Dead Man*.

Three versions of varying texts are now recognized: the Heliopolitan, the Theban and the Saite. The first named recension is very ancient, but the hieroglyphs of which it is composed were still inscribed on coffins and tombs until approximately 200 B.C. The Theban version, however, is usually inscribed on papyri and stresses the supremacy of the god Amen Ra. Thebes was a centre of his worship and the sun-god's ministers added various prayers, liturgies and hymns to the funerary ritual. Subsequently, Theban papyri bear both hieroglyphic and hieratic characters and later still the demotic script was employed.

The Saite version was of later use, and it was utilized during the reigns of the successors of Alexander. But when Egypt passed from Greek dominion to that of Rome other and more novel funerary inscriptions became current and the venerable Book of the Dead fell into neglect. Boulton thinks that: "It seems as if an attempt were made to extract from the old work the texts which were regarded as absolutely necessary to salvation, and as if the older mythology was unknown to the Egyptians of that period. It is quite certain that many of the scribes copied texts without understanding them, and that the meanings of many of the vignettes were lost."

The greatest of the Nilotic gods were not omnipotent. They feared the evil powers and were driven to secure themselves from their malevolence by means of magical formulae. The divinity of reflection and

research and alleged inventor of writing was Thoth, and he provided these antidotes to evil. Even the mighty solar divinity, Ra, was ever dependent upon the secrecy of the name that Thoth had given him. Nor was Thoth's beneficence confined to the deities alone. Poor wayward humanity was also granted favours, for when death occurred and the deceased set out on the long and perilous journey to the Elysian Fields his sole helper and adviser was the god Thoth who, in the remotely distant past, had aided him to overcome the innumerable perils of his pilgrimage by providing him with the sacred Book of the Dead.

T. F. PALMER

## The Origin of the Bible

### I.

SINCE Sir Frederic Kenyon published the first edition of his book, *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* in 1895, a great many discoveries have been made, and a great deal of light has been shed on Bible origins. The problem of how we got the Bible is a very fascinating one from the literary point of view which, in the main, is the theme of the work of Sir Frederic; not that he is not a "believer"—he undoubtedly is, though he does not obtrude the fact.

For him, the question is not one particularly of "inspiration" or even theology. All he is concerned with is how we got the Bible, and his book a very clear and succinct account of the manuscripts of the Bible in various languages, and how they were translated, and of what value they were in determining what was the original text of the "holy" book.

So many and various have been recent discoveries, however, that a new edition, revised and enlarged, of *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* was absolutely necessary, and it is interesting to compare the new one which has recently appeared with the old.

From the purely literary standpoint many interesting questions have been solved, or are in the process of being solved by the recent finds; but for us, the main interest lies in the problem, not of pure literature, but of pure "inspiration"—that is, are we any nearer proving that the Bible is "God's Word" than we were before? And of that Sir Frederic does not say a word. All he can say is that, however important the discoveries of the past 43 years have been, and however much "various readings" have added to our understanding of the different texts, "they do not affect the fundamental doctrines of Christianity, nor the general authenticity of the records." That is perhaps a distinct sop to the average Christian reader, or to his own beliefs.

But what does he say of the Ras-Shamra excavations about which I recently wrote a few articles? He admits that "they enable us to appreciate much better the surrounding among which the books of the Old Testament came into being. In particular, we know far better than ever before the origins of writing, and the forms in which books were written and circulated during the centuries in which those books were produced." This is, of course, quite true; but how does it affect "the fundamental doctrines of Christianity and Judaism" which, after all, is the main purpose of Palestinian excavation? Are we any nearer showing God's handiwork in the composition of the books of the Bible? Sir Frederic also adds:—

The writing of the tablets is a cuneiform alphabetic script with twenty-nine characters. The exact relation of it to the Sinaitic and Phœnician scripts has still to be worked out. The language is Semitic,

and can be fairly described as proto-Phœnician or Proto-Hebrew. . . . No one can question their relationship with the early Hebrew religion . . . it is clear that analogies existed between the beliefs and rites of the Canaanites and those of the Hebrews . . . the supreme god at Ugarit was El, who rules over the other gods. His symbol is the bull.

Naturally, for a Christian believer like Sir Frederic Kenyon, it would be almost impossible to admit that the monotheism of Judaism was directly based on the pagan myths of the original Canaanites, and that whatever "inspiration" is found in the Old Testament was directly inspired by the bull-god El found described on the Ras-Shamra tablets.

Personally, I was interested to read how Sir Frederic dealt again with the question of the Hebrew language. Readers may remember that some years ago I dealt with this problem in a series of articles, showing as well as I was able, that the Hebrew of the Pentateuch was a made-up language much as Esperanto is to-day. I contended that there was no evidence whatever that it was ever a spoken language as is so often claimed in books about the Jews and the Bible. It was a holy or sacred language made up by and for priests, and the fact that no copy of the Old Testament has been discovered written in the so-called Old Hebrew (whatever that is) but only in the square characters known as modern Hebrew proves my contention. (There is no evidence that the Samaritan Pentateuch which is written in other characters is older than the square lettered Hebrew). I was not surprised to find that in the new edition of *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts*, its author shirked the problem, or airily dismissed it as of not much consequence. In this he has had many notable precedents. But it is amusing to read some of his comments. For example, on page 6 he heads a paragraph, "Early Hebrew writing." This is the paragraph:—

In the Amarna tablets we have actual documents written in Palestine about the time of Joshua. They show that writing was then familiarly known and freely used, and consequently that historical records may easily have been composed and preserved from that period. They are, however, not in Hebrew or in any other dialect of Palestine, but in Babylonian, which was apparently the official medium of correspondence, even with Egypt, much as French has been in modern Europe.

That is, "early Hebrew writing" is *not* Hebrew, "or any other dialect of Palestine," though why Sir Frederic should call it Hebrew is one of those theological mysteries which he as a rule makes a point of carefully avoiding. He describes the Moabite Stone, which is generally dated about the year 800 B.C., as being written "in what is known as the Semitic alphabet common to the Phœnicians, Arameans, and Hebrews." There is by no means unanimous agreement about the authenticity of the Moabite Stone, but in any case it is not written in the Hebrew of the Pentateuch, so we are not advanced much further.

A further discovery of this "Semitic" alphabet was made when what are known as the Serabit Inscriptions were discovered in 1904-5; but they were not claimed as the "ancestor" of the Hebrew alphabet until 1929, by Alan Gardiner. Whether this gentleman is quoted as an "authority" is not quite clear; but Sir Frederic evidently does not think so, as he says this alphabet "may well be the ancestor of the Phœnician, and therefore ultimately of the Greek alphabet." (Italics mine).

Then a fragment of pottery found in Gezer in 1930 "dating about 2000-1600 B.C., bears three letters similar" to those on the Serabit Inscriptions, and several more pieces of pottery have been found which ought to have proved something of value to this prob-

lem of the Hebrew language; but unfortunately "the exact dates and interpretation of these inscriptions are still matters of discussion among specialists." The net result of all this excavation and all this study by specialists is that they are now convinced that "writing was known and practised in Palestine, not only in Babylonian cuneiform, but in the script from which Hebrew eventually developed, from the time when the Hebrews entered Palestine after the Exodus." (It cannot too strongly be pointed out that for the story of the Exodus, as given in the Bible, there is no external evidence whatever. On the contrary, whatever evidence can be adduced from excavations or inscriptions points out that the Bible story is quite impossible—which one would expect.) As far as the Hebrew spoken language is concerned, nothing in such books as the one I am dealing with is concerned, is known. Writers like Sir Frederic are almost beside themselves with joy if the slightest evidence can be produced to show that some script which may actually be miles away from our square Hebrew can be found with "specialists" telling us that here at last is the progenitor of the Hebrew writing. Obviously it would be almost impossible if some kind of stroke could not be made by a stylus or pen or other writing instrument which would not be like some part of a Hebrew letter.

In any case as far as excavations are concerned nothing whatever has been discovered to add to our knowledge of the Hebrew language; and I might add neither has the discovery of old pieces of papyrus with fragmentary verses from the Old Testament done more than add to our confusion as to what was the original form of the "holy" writings. The reason for this confusion is simply that the more of these old bits of manuscript are found the more there appears to be what are known to Biblical critics as "various readings." Which of these is the true one is the job of the Biblical textual expert, and a heartbreaking job it appears to be. How is one to say which of a dozen readings is the one which came, so to speak, straight from God's mouth? What is the criterion?

Of course, the Jews have a settled text. This is known as the Massoretic Text, and for Sir Frederic Kenyon it settles the question—more or less, that is. For even he has some qualms about the other "readings." However, his opinion may carry some weight, and I shall therefore deal with it in another article.

H. CUTNER

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### To God

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(God ahoy! Attaboy, Brother!) . . .  
 Have you chosen which side, and put your money on?  
 (God ahoy! Attaboy, Brother!)  
 Can I help you with the present of a crocodile,  
 Can I aid with the donation of an onion  
 Or assist you with the gift of this mock ode, I'll  
 Be charmed—and most delighted,  
 (God! Attaboy, Brother!) . . .

Drip a drop on this benighted  
 Little bubble of a blister:  
 Where the blighted blooded rubble  
 Never missed a bid for Trouble—  
 (God ahoy! Attaboy, Brother!)  
 Drip a drop upon this battlefield a 'stubble. . .  
 Should the tear fall alongside  
 The Wrong side—or the Strong side, and you lose—  
 Or win—its no disaster,  
 Being Master; with a vaster Time to choose  
 From for your bet. . . .  
 (So its hailfellow, well met,  
 God ahoy! Attaboy, Brother!)

C. R. B. SUMNER

## The Cross Christianity—Its Mark

THE famous Sermon on the Mount, to which Christianity is to-day reduced in many opportunist minds, did not forget to remind us that "The Tree is known by its fruit." The Christian Nations are not, however, prepared to listen to the Words of the Master in that respect. As Ruskin once reminded us, no Christians are so inclined to treat with disrespect the words of the Master *when they don't like them* as those who spend most of their time boosting their more than human value.

In my lifetime I can remember one ex-Prime Minister twitting a reigning Prime Minister who was not averse to claiming the things which went right in the last War as his own personal achievements ("when I took the job in hand") with preserving a complete air of detachment on some of the things that had gone badly. It appeared to him only fair when such huge claims were made to include everything as being in his "bag." But you cannot catch a trickster that way. Christianity is, at times, according to its spokesmen, the most magnificent piece of social usefulness that has ever appeared on the earth. At other times, we are told, Christianity has never been tried; it is because men have turned a deaf ear to the regenerating words of their Saviour, that trouble has occurred. We are often told that one cannot have things both ways. It is as silly as the oft-quoted remark of the gentleman in the stocks: You know *they cannot put me in the stocks* for what I have done. It is the very essence of the shrewd business man to have things both ways. His principle is to have his "basis" so elastic that it can justify a course of action in himself and condemn it in others. It would be wasting time to show this principle in operation in High Christian Statesmanship. It would be folly to give illustrations from the Church of Christ, either in the Holy Mother Church or in the Church by Law Established, the Church of Henry Eighth, that great intellectual and ethical luminary.

If Christianity after two thousand years is helpless in a situation as at present exists, the conclusion is plain that Christianity has failed, and ignominiously. If man is not ready for the miraculously regenerating words of the Sermon on the Mount, who knew better that this would be the case than Omnipotence? It is curious as well that those who preach a Progressive Revelation (based upon, they tell us, an appreciation of man's backwardness, and how it is only common-sense to release the regenerating fluid in small doses at a time), do not find it strange that God himself in his Revelation to Man showed no such economy. He revealed defective (to put it mildly) morality as well as other kinds. Mankind, struggling towards the better technique for living with his kind, has not been helped onwards by "Thus Saith the Lord." Ancient infamies have by this very means become stabilized and man's ethical development made the more difficult. "Those who have had ears to hear" have, in response to their own superior ethics, eventually treated "Thus saith the Lord" with contempt, whenever it deserved it. But how many decent men, with a conscience that *what the Lord said* did not satisfy, have refrained from marching forward under the banner of a saner ethic because the odium theologicum made it dangerous in the next world, and difficult in this, to make any advance.

There are good things in the Sermon in the Mount, of course; there are innumerable common-places; there are vile things. It is man, again, who must be eclectic, picking, after analysis, the good, and throwing the

bad into the ethical dustbin. If this be Progressive Revelation, it is not *Christianity*. It is *Man*, struggling to be free, and throwing off, one after the other, the fetters that have made his progress difficult, and almost impossible. The Revelation of God to Man has not helped us; it has hindered us. Jesus has not saved us by telling us to emulate the fowls of the air and the lilies of the field and "take no thought for the morrow." He did not assist by telling us "The Soul's the thing."

If we had removed the Sermon on the Mount from the Schools of England, and other countries, would we have been worse off than we are at this moment? If we had substituted for the New Testament, *Æsop's Fables*, putting them before children just as they were written, with the "Morals" adduced to be discussed and argued about before acceptance, would this present generation have been less conscious of their proper position in the universe? Would they have had less recognition of the fact that the business of living here and now is a full time job? Would they have been less blind to the fact that men and women have anti-social, as well as social qualities, which have to be understood and undermined by wise and philosophic methods so that this world may be a place in which it is worth-while living? Would Two Thousand Years of consideration of the Story of the Man, the Boy and the Ass, the Warriors and the Two-faced Shield, The Wolf and the Lamb, the Egotistical Frog, and the rest, would such studies have failed entirely to make mankind a little more considerate, a little less overbearing, a little more kind? They would certainly not have taught mankind to scrub and darn their miserable little souls in order to cut a good figure the day after they are dead. For this purpose *Æsop's Fables*, *The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius*, and the *Essays*, of Montaigne and Emerson, are but illustrations of Man's intellectual pride. They have no relish of salvation in them; therefore they are damned. Yet is there any other way than by treading the path of human wisdom, by which Mankind can be saved?

T. H. ELSTON

## Acid Drops

A great deal of dissatisfaction and indignation is being expressed in the press at the indiscriminate and non-understandable manner in which war news is withheld and information to the public forbidden by the censorship and Ministry of Information—two of the heavily overstocked government departments. Much of this information is in the hands of the press, but its publication is "verboten." The explanation seems to us simple, and the fact complained of inevitable. A censorship exists to censor, and if the question were raised in Parliament the obvious defence would be not the nature of the things censored but the number. So also with the withholding of information. Such vital things as an intended visit of the King to Portsmouth, or the return of the Queen from Balmoral, or that Mr. Chamberlain has been, or is going, to France, and that he has left his umbrella behind, belong to a class of facts that might give important information to the enemy. Make a policeman's utility depend upon the number of people he locks up and the number of charges will increase. Human nature is human nature whether it is that of Censor or a humble "copper."

How the Catholic censorship works in America has been shown recently by the way Paramount Pictures was inundated with protests when the Corporation announced that its star actor, Don Ameche, was taking the lead in a film entitled, "I Want a Divorce." Ameche, it appears, is a Catholic, and the Catholics rose as in one mass with

horror at the idea that a Catholic wants a divorce even in a play. Paramount bowed to the storm and another actor has been given the part. Catholics will now no doubt completely boycott the film. And these are the people who want the world to rise against the dictatorship of Hitler or Stalin! What a world this would be if they had real power.

The Catholic theologian is, of course, never at a loss for an answer when explaining the mysteries of Holy Writ. One of them, replying to a puzzled believer, says, "Adam's sons presumably married their sisters. This was necessary at the beginning." So that the Catholic Church, while ready to admit some truth in Evolution—or some sort of Evolution—when discussing the problems of the origin of the human race before educated people, palms off this piece of typical nonsense before the readers of the *Universe*. There really were an Adam and Eve, they really had a large number of sons and daughters, and these all really committed "incest," at "the beginning." This is the kind of history taught in Catholic schools, and fervently believed in by most of our Catholic *intelligentsia*. And the State is supposed to pay for this kind of education in its schools!

We see the Rev. C. L. Tweedale has written a book of nearly 400 pages on *News from the Next World*. We see no reason why such a work should not consist of 4,000 or even 400,000 pages. Where statement cannot be checked by fact, and wishful thinking takes the place of knowledge, the only limit to how much one can say is time and money for printing. Mr. Tweedale is asking whether anyone with money will help him to print his work. If any of our readers are so inclined, his address is Weston Vicarage, Otley, Yorks.

To the disgrace of our criminal courts, pressing to death, the *peine forte et dure*, was inflicted, as late as the eighteenth century, on prisoners who refused to plead guilty or not guilty. This stopped the trial; the prisoner could not be convicted, and so he saved his property from being confiscated.

Many men endured this agonizing death for the sake of their families. At last it was decided that those who refused to plead were to be understood to have pleaded not guilty. It sometimes takes a long time before obvious solutions are adopted.

This is an extract from an article on "Courage," by Dr. W. R. Inge. How well he might have elaborated that last sentence to show from whom opposition to "obvious solutions" mainly came—the bench of bishops.

Bishop Hensley Henson in his new book: *The Church of England*, can scarcely be regarded as flattering to that crazy mixture of miscellaneous beliefs, wherein are joined together a number of most rigidly definite and formal creeds. The laws of England will not permit deviation from the statements of some doctrines so wildly incredible that no sane person could accept them to-day. So the law contradictorily says Believe what you like but Say what you are told to say. Dr. Henson's summary has much force.

The Church of England still retains the imposing façade of the Elizabethan Establishment which Hooker defended, but that façade is as delusive as it is picturesque. It belongs to a past which can never return.

Records make it unnecessary to cite the instances where the bishops have stood firm against reform and common humanity. In more recent years the abolition of flogging and the provision of seats for tired shop-girls are mild examples of their distaste for humanizing reforms. Even to-day their brothers-in-the-Lord utter the last word of the death sentence: "Amen." So let it be was always the churches' note of resignation to calamity—so long as the calamity did not fall upon the churches. One great comfort springs from Dr. Inge's words above: that is, that we *do* progress, and savagery to-day is recognized for what it really is when it is not subjected to theological interpretation.

Not even the crack of doom would change the addle-brained, plethoric-penned type of journalist on our daily press, judging from some of the war reports and commentaries. Coldly detached from the fires of war their imagination cannot rise beyond the super-racial sentiments of the old music-hall and pot-house jingoism. Be it remembered that Capt. Langsdorf of the Graf Spee paid fair tribute to the splendid achievements of our navy at Montevideo. Followed the scuttling of the pocket-battleship and German wireless comment thereon, which concluded: "the battleship gave a performance which will be set up as a model of German sea warfare." What's wrong with that? Nothing, we'd warrant, if the promise of clean encounters like that off the River Plate is kept, which our navy would be the first to appreciate. If, against hopeless odds, Germany chose to save brave men from suicide, or merely wished to preserve naval secrets, our navy would be the last to jeer. The jeer comes from a contemptible scribbler.

Laicus Ignotus, of the *Church Times*, who never misses an opportunity for a sneer at Jews tells us that "he is inclined to doubt the wisdom of the press boycott of the meetings of the British Fascists." He gives as a reason that Mosley attracts crowds, and that he repeats the Nazi charges that the Jews are behind our troubles. In addition Sir Oswald recently declared that "international Jewish finance is the master of the Labour Party." So it is very wrong of our national press to hide these statements coming from such an authority as Mosley. Well, the *Church Times* seems very glad to give publicity to such libels—though we wonder whether many people outside lunatic asylums really believe them? Does Laicus Ignotus?

The Catholic Bishop Marshall has been letting himself go with some cheery old-time pontifical utterances recently. He "totally disapproves of dances on Sunday nights." He also "disapproves of girls going to the common dance halls on these dark nights." He wants it to be "thoroughly understood" that he will not grant dispensations for mixed marriages "for the asking." He has to answer to "Almighty God" for mixed marriages, and it is obvious Almighty God would never approve of these dangers—in the ultimate—to the Faith. There are also many other subtle attacks on the Faith to which the Bishop drew attention, and against which he was adamant. We are glad to say, however, that the "dangers" will persist in spite of his fulminations—and in spite of the fact that the Church will continue to suffer under them.

More amusing accounts of "religion in the army" come from a "Serving Soldier" writing in the *Church Times*. He seems to have had plenty of experience, and his article will be not be liked, we are certain, either by most of his readers or most of our army chaplains. For example:—

A clerical voice will move the troops to ribaldry, and clerical jargon will merely provide the company's "funny man" with a little copy for his next unofficial entertainment. Did "Woodbine Willie" or Dick Sheppard or "Tubby" listen complacently to dirty stories, or, on the other hand, talk like stage curates? . . . The parade service is really a survival from an age when it was the normal practice of most Englishmen to go to Church on Sunday. . . . I have always been baffled by the passionate attachment of so many of the clergy to it. Do they seriously suppose that Almighty God is seriously gratified [by it] . . . or that the men themselves are likely to derive much advantage from compulsory worship? . . . A few years ago I went to a parade on Salisbury Plain. . . . [The men] were not hostile they were merely bored. . . . It is more likely that the man who has become accustomed to go to church parade will cease to go to church at all when the voice of the sergeant-major is stilled.

We could hardly have put the case against compulsory church parade better ourselves.

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# THE FREETHINKER

FOUNDED BY G. W. FOOTE

61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4  
Telephone No.: CENTRAL 2412.

## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

LETTERS received, in the special circumstances, will have attention next week.

The "Freethinker" is supplied to the trade on sale or return. Any difficulty in securing copies should be at once reported to this office.

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

Friends who send us newspapers would enhance the favour by marking the passages to which they wish us to call attention.

Orders for literature should be sent to the Business Manager of the Pioneer Press, 61 Farringdon Street, London, E.C.4, and not to the Editor.

When the services of the National Secular Society in connexion with Secular Burial Services are required, all communications should be addressed to the Secretary, R. H. Rosetti, giving as long notice as possible.

The "Freethinker" will be forwarded direct from the Publishing Office at the following rates (Home and Abroad):—  
One year, 15/-; half year, 7/6; three months, 3/9.

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

## Sugar Plums

Life, as we have so often said, is too serious a thing to be taken with solemnity. The man who imagines that the best way is to meet serious events with a long face is not meeting life with courage, but with timidity, if not with a degree of downright cowardice. To smile in the presence of trouble is, to cultivate a capacity that man alone of animals has. It cheers the one that trouble threatens, and encourages those who behold him. Fear, said a wise old Roman, created the gods, and when man met them with a laugh their reign soon ended. Not even a ghost can bear being laughed at, and when a man laughs at an apparition he is at once struck off that spirit's visiting list. God's ghosts and parsons love solemnity, and a man who entered a Church laughing will be looked at askance by the "unco guid." There may even be an occasion for a smile at a funeral—provided the right kind of person occupies the place of the corpse.

So, in spite of the times, here's wishing all readers of this journal as happy a new year as is possible. There are plenty of occasions and opportunity for sorrow, and many of us will miss the figures of sons, sweethearts, husbands and friends before the year is passed. But if they are worth the sorrow that these losses bring in their train, let us find some consolation in the fact that we Freethinkers do not surround their final absence with the fears and fitful hopes that religion has bred in so many. The dead are at rest and the sorrow is ours, and we show ourselves most worthy of their love and confidence when we are strong enough to remember that that grief can be very foolish, even morbidly so. For that reason we emphasize the wish for a happy new year. And, if we wish to make New Year resolutions, let us resolve to make the world a more enlightened place to live in, and in so doing make it the occasion of greater and more lasting happiness. A Happy New Year to all!

We are sending copies of the *Freethinker* and other literature post free to men serving in the Army, Navy and Air Force. We will continue doing this if friends will help by sending addresses along. We have no desire

to send this literature where it is not likely to be of use, and we rely upon those who send addresses to see that our efforts are not wasted.

We have already published the statement of the War Office, that men joining the Army should have no obstacle placed in their way to having their statement on "religion" to be entered on the records exactly as given by them—whether Atheist, Agnostic, Freethinker or Rationalist. And further, if there has been any error made, if they have agreed to the suggestion that Church of England be entered, the name may be altered at any time when the soldier thinks fit to ask for this to be done. A similar official assurance has been now received from the Minister for Air, and we hope that all men joining the Army, and those already in any of the forces, will act upon it.

This is, of course, no more than every man in this country has the legal right to demand. But large numbers of men joining the forces are deprived of their legal rights through either the bigotry or ignorance of officials. Anyone but a Christian clergyman would be ashamed to stand by while men are swindled out of their legal rights in the name of religion.

But those who are not ashamed to have grown-up men marched to Church by order are not likely to be squeamish in the matter of a declaration of faith. But there is something curious about enlisting men to fight in "a war for freedom," when the first thing that happens when he enters the army is to rob him of his rights, and the next is to force him to take part in a religious service in which he has no belief.

If we are not really and genuinely desirous of creating a true democracy it is time our public men left off using such expressions as "His Majesty's Army" or Navy, or Air Force. Or "His Majesties Dominions." Such language belongs to a time before the idea of democracy—in modern times—had any hold on the people. The British Army, the British Navy, the British Air-Force, the British Dominions, are surely the proper terms to use. There is an additional value in terms. Neither the French nor the Americans speak of the President paying a visit to his soldiers, or speak of the President's Navy or Army. The way to create a democracy is to get the people used to the idea; to make them feel that the language of personal ownership is keeping ideas alive that we ought to feel we have outgrown. If newspapers would set the example they would be conducting a genuinely educational work.

There are many worse presents that one may give a friend than subscribing for a year's supply of the *Freethinker*. Of course a friend who is not at present a subscriber, but who may become one. For that reason we are repeating the offer we made last year. To every new yearly subscription to the *Freethinker* (15s. post free) the choice of five shillingworth of Pioneer Press publications will be added. A form will be found on the back pages of this issue. We have secured many new readers in this way, and we hope to get more.

An important item omitted from the printed reminders in most Diaries is that subscriptions to the National Secular Society fall due on January 1. Wherever possible the work of the N.S.S. is being carried on in spite of adverse conditions, and members in giving early attention to the despatch of subscriptions for 1940 will need no reminder that whatever financial support is given will be spent well and wisely in the interests of our movement.

Friends of the movement in Birmingham are invited by the local N.S.S. Branch to a talk and discussion on Sunday, January 21, at 1 Colmore Street, Horse Fair, Birmingham, at 7 p.m. As there are no lighting restrictions yet for the moon, which will be full three days later, travelling will be comfortable, and a well-attended meeting should result. The effort to keep things going in Birmingham deserves the full support of all local Freethinkers.

## The Ignoble Illusion

AFTER a splendid period of racial tolerance under the culture-stars of great poets, thinkers, and musicians, Germany became the centre of race hatred in Europe. This reaction coincided with the emergences of German economic and political nationalism; and after the defeat of France in the Franco-Prussian War German culture, under State tutelage, openly embraced theories of race superiority.

The mouldering idiocies of Gobineau were revived and embellished to prove that those peoples whose economic and political weight in Europe pressed heavily on the expanding German State—i.e., the French, Italians, and Russians—belonged to inferior racial stocks.

Moreover, these race theories served also to keep the German democratic movement, a natural phenomenon of economic nationalism, in check, and to give propulsive power to capitalist Pan-Germanism. It is too lengthy a task to record the wild cultural excesses of this latter here; but it may be said that by the end of the nineteenth century various theories of exclusive race qualities dominated official German culture.

The music-dramas of Richard Wagner, which were charged with theatrical race superiority pretensions, found a slavish group of pseudo-scientific interpreters; but the bible of the movement was the two-volume shoddy romance history, already mentioned, by the Englishman, Houston Stewart Chamberlain. This Chamberlain belonged to the Wagner circle; he married Wagner's daughter; and when his father-in-law stood exposed as a physical, mental, and moral bankrupt in "Parsifal," he did his best to uphold the family attachment to the cultural reaction.

It was in the Germany of this period that the great Aryan illusion flowered. In the sphere of politics it became an inflated and bombastic species of chauvinism, supported by phrenology. But it found wide acceptance. There is an obvious explanation of this flight towards a cultural madhouse. Just as the down-at-heel aristocrat finds consolation in the ancient line of his blood, so the petit-bourgeois intoxicates himself on the fable of the superiority of his race.

The joke is that many of the leaders of pre-War Pan-Germanism were, like Chamberlain, not of a German nationality. And this joke is repeated, with ironic insistence, in the race-drunk National Socialist Party today. The leaders of this Party are not German Germans, but immigrants from Austria, like Hitler; from the Baltic provinces of Tsarist Russia, like Alfred Rosenberg; from the colonies, like Hess and Darré.

It needed the school of barbaric national braggadocio in the border lands in order to infuse into the Nazi leaders the ideas which later found an echo in the hearts of the most barbarous classes in Germany.

To-day the world is reaping the second harvest of Germany's cultural adoption of racial superiority theories. The first harvest cost upwards of twelve million lives; it is possible that this second harvest will cost even more.

Stripping the subject of all its purely academic accretions it can be seen that the personality and the class—Liberalism and Marxism—are the evils. The nation is the good. But on the threshold of private property this philosophy turns into its opposite.

Only in personal property lies salvation! The idea of public, of national property, is the brood of Bolshevism. The petit-bourgeois defies the nation, but he will not make presents to it. On the contrary, he looks to the nation to present him with property and to protect him against the proletariat and the unemployed.

In the sphere of modern capitalism, with its international connexions and impersonal methods, the race principle appears to have arisen from a cemetery of mediaeval ideas. Its contemporary exponents make concessions in advance. Race purity, which in the realm of the spirit has to be certified by a pass, must be demonstrated in the realm of matter—the economic sphere—by business efficiency.

Under present conditions that means competitive capacity. Racism returns through the backdoor to economic liberalism, purged only from political liberties.

Racism is a piece of pure ritualism, a ceremonial compensation for unchanged actualities. If the way to hell is paved with good intentions, the modern political and economic scene, with its constant insistence on the right to rule and exploit by virtue of superior qualities of blood, is paved with symbols.

And these symbols, as we shall see, hide the most preposterous collection of "scientific" rubbish that has ever been piled up to obscure biological and anthropological truth.

According to Friedrich Hertz, whose contribution to the race question can be accepted as the final interpretation of modern research, the confusion among scientists on the subject of race is so bewildering that "as a consequence . . . many representatives of the sciences of culture refuse to employ the term 'race,' since it belongs exclusively to the realm of the natural sciences."

He quotes Lamarck, who said that "divisions are only artificial names; for, in truth, nature has formed neither classes nor orders, neither families, nor sorts, nor species."

Among the anthropologists the conflict of opinion as to racial division is so acute as to be irresolvable. Hertz has made a table of scientific differences, and while it is incomplete it serves to illustrate the impossibility of arriving at any generally acceptable estimate.

For instance, Cuvier and Quatrefages divide mankind into three racial divisions; Linnaeus and Huxley into eleven; Blumenbach into five; Buffon into six; Prichard, Hunter, Peschel into seven; Agassiz into eight; Desmoulin and Pickering into eleven; Haeckel and Franz Müller into twelve; Bory St. Vincent into fifteen; Malte Brun into sixteen; Topinard into eighteen; Morton into thirty-two; and Gliddon into a hundred and fifty!

No wonder that the foremost contemporary anthropologists are of the opinion that the subject of racial divisions is so confused that they must be abandoned altogether in scientific discussions. It is left to Nazis, the cultural residuary legatees of Gobineau and Chamberlain, to insist, in the face of this congestion of differences, on clear racial demarcations. But, as I have shown, they have economic and political reasons for vegetating in the land of "scientific" fable.

The natural philosophy of Darwin, however, renders all attempts to arrive at the numbers of racial divisions superfluous. This philosophy still holds the field, in spite of the attempts of moronic totemists and political gangsters to expel it; and Darwinism insists on the common ancestry of the human race.

This position is consolidated by the leading contemporary anatomists, embryologists, and ethnologists, whose results—arrived at from vastly different lines of approach—converge on the truth that the various characteristics of the human race are the consequences of adaptations to natural conditions.

(Reprinted) (The Late) HAVELOCK ELLIS

## Laws of the Universe

IN these dreary days when the crimes and follies of the European Governments disgust even the least sophisticated among us, it is refreshing to turn to the night-sky spangled with stars. The black-out has brought one good thing to London: namely that on most nights in the Metropolis now, one can see the stars, those million, million units in the ranks of the greatest of all Armies—"the Army of Unalterable Law."

What was it that George Meredith said in his fine sonnet, *Lucifer in Starlight*?

. . . At the stars,  
Which are the brain of heaven, he looked and sank.  
Around the ancient track, marched rank on rank  
The army of unalterable law.

I do not know how the stupendous spectacle of the heavens when a myriad stars are visible really affects

most of my fellow-men. To me they are at once a comfort (perhaps an irrational one), and an awe-inspiring, heart-searching reminder of those Fundamental Realities that mankind knows next to nothing about. All those golden pinpricks, in reality worlds, greater than our own, whether seen by the eye, the telescope, or by astral photography, in number as the hairs of one's head or the sands on the sea-shore are at once an elevating and a depressing spectacle. The distances from us and from each other! The boundless infinity of space in which they move or appear to move and have their being! From the standpoint of the great uncharted universe how infinitely little appears the mass of human individuals upon this earth. And these "great" European Wars for Freedom and Civilization—the pigmy combats of human insects or microbes, not even visible, one might think, to a disgusted Cosmic Onlooker except through some enormous celestial microscope!

Certainly the sight of the star-populated sky helps one to get oneself, this War and indeed the whole Earth and all human life, into perspective. That was the genius of Dean Swift—that he could see the whole race of man and all his activities from a Cosmic viewpoint, and that he could, in "Gulliver," make us see ourselves with more than ordinary eyes or telescopes. His was a vision too shocking for England; and she promptly turned the unendurable and devastating book into a fairy-tale for children. But when contemplated with our modern knowledge, the stars are as devastating as anything in Swift, and so we babble inanities about them to our children like "Twinkle, twinkle little star" every line of which contains at least one charming falsehood.

As one gazes at the stars, astronomical figures begin to buzz in the brain. Did not Sir David Gill tell us that the Star Canopus is, in reality, a million-and-a-half times brighter than our sun, that star-baby? And Carl Snyder said that a man on the earth in the Universe was like a microbe on the surface of a microscopic drop of mist in a fog covering the whole Atlantic Ocean. Think of a star travelling so fast in the fathomless abyss of space that a cannon-ball beside it would appear to be creeping! Or the nearest star to the earth being 26 million, million miles away (they tell me so, and who am I to disbelieve the learned astronomers?) with light travelling 186,000 miles a second. I like to think of our World and all upon it with its weight of 6,000 million billion tons flying through space at the rate of 19 miles a second and spinning upon its axis at another mad rate, that I am glad to say I forget. It makes the aeroplanes and the cars seem what they indeed are—microscopic childish toys of no importance.

Then one begins to remind oneself of the eternal, immutable laws of this creation—the only enduring things. How force and matter are indestructible in the stars as here! How everything changes constantly, but nothing is, or can be destroyed! How gravitation as Newton discovered it, is obeyed by the heavenly bodies as here.

How in those starry worlds the same elements are found as here! How even within the smallest particle of matter on earth the same stellar movement goes on! How nothing in the whole universe (however it seems) ever remains still for a single second; not even the particles in a rock or a "lifeless" metal! And how finally all things "die"—not merely the brute beasts, and man returning to his earth, but our whole world and all those stellar bodies, whether suns, moons or vast constellations, planets or the smallest, furthest individual speck of star-dust! Indeed the whole universe, one supposes, must at some date, perhaps infinitely distant, run down like an Atmos clock. And when all is gone, must it not be that the very laws

which we know as eternal, unvarying, immutable (like the law of the Medes and Persians "which altereth not") will go too? The very end of all—nothingness. Of even space and time themselves? The mind staggers at Nothingness and clutches at the idea of a Universe like a clock re-winding only to stagger again at the idea of never-ending eternity, on and on and on like a damnable recurring decimal. . . .

The human mind—at any rate, my human mind—is such a poor little instrument, so limited in its capacity, that it reels like a drugged creature before these concepts. One feels like a small earthquake-recording instrument suddenly meeting entire terrestrial dissolution! From these appalling realities of the stellar system one drops one's eyes from that horrifying firmament to the comfort of the solid ground at one's feet. . . . Back from the empyrean, back from the boundless infinities of space with its inexorable terrifying laws as true of the lowliest piece of earthly protoplasm as of the stars in their courses. . . .

I said at the beginning of this article that it was refreshing to turn from this earth of insensate folly and criminality to those incredible innumerable stars.

And so it was. But it is a relief to return. After an excursion among the heavenly hosts like that, the drivel of the wireless and the newspapers, the idiocies of war-making Governments whether so-called "democratic" or "totalitarian" cease to irritate or exasperate. Let the politicians and warriors of Lilliput continue their absurd antics amongst their fellow-ants, fellow-termites or microscopically minute germs called mankind. The universe in its majesty continues upon its course and tolerates all its crawling insects. The Army of Unalterable Law marches on above our heads as under our feet, and within our very selves—despite ourselves.

C. G. L. DU CANN

## Of Feet

Sweet are the uses of adversity;  
Which, like the toad, ugly and venomous,  
Wears yet a precious jewel in his head.

(As You Like It. Act II., Sc. 1.)

BUT for adversity most of us would remain ignorant of the jewels we possess. 'Tis only when deprived of things that we become conscious of their values.

We never miss the water—  
Till the well runs dry.

There is nothing we are so conscious of as the value of light because of recurring darkness. Contrast is one of life's greatest teachers.

Some of the uses of adversity, however, may be anything but sweet. To be made startlingly awake during the night by a little devil trying to amputate one's big toe with a red-hot saw, makes no contribution to sweetness and light. Instead of which we rapidly unpack our heart of words—unfit for publication!—as though that was the first step towards recovery. But be the uses of adversity sweet or sour, that we possess a precious jewel in our feet no longer admits of doubt. Rheumatic gout can be so provokingly convincing!

Our feet are not prized as they should be. The use we make of them is confined to making a few strides between vehicles which enable us to dispense with feet. From our earliest years this seems to have been our object. From cradle to perambulator; then bicycles, motors, railways, aircraft, telegraphs, telephones, etc., have nearly rendered feet unnecessary.

But whether my feet be precious jewels or not, I

cannot help wishing that I had been constructed like the allerions—those footless birds mentioned in *Camden's Remains*. Camden tells us how "Geoffrey of Boullion, at one draught of his bow, shooting against David's tower in Jerusalem, broached three footless birds called allerions." What compensations, if any, these birds had, for being footless, Camden does not inform us.

Compensated by memory, and a little calligraphic ability, the following recollections of a "footless" human bird may prove interesting. At Sunday School we learned:—

How the dying Jacob "gathered up his feet into the bed and yielded up the ghost." (Gen. xlix. 33); how Jonathan, Saul's son, had a son that was lame of his feet. He was five years old when the tidings came of Saul and Jonathan out of Jezreel, and his nurse took him up and fled, and it came to pass as she make haste to flee that he fell and became lame. And his name was Mephibosheth. David wishing to show kindness to any issue left of the house of Saul, "for Jonathan's sake," ordered that Mephibosheth "shall eat at my table as one of the King's sons." "So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem, for he did eat continually at the King's table, and he was lame on both his feet." (2 Sam. iv., and ix.); how King Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, was nevertheless in the time of his old age diseased in his feet, died, and slept with his fathers (1 Kings xv. 23); how nothing of Jezebel was left for burial, but her skull, feet, and the palms of her hands. She had been thrown from an upper window and trodden underfoot of horses. (2 Kings ix. 35); how the Children of Israel, after wandering forty years in the wilderness "lacked nothing, their clothes waxed not old, and their feet swelled not." (Neh. ix. 21); how the Lord hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet (Nahum i. 3); how "The feet of him who bringeth good tidings" were not only "beautiful upon the mountains"; how the shaking off the dust of the feet (Math. x. 14) was a custom more to be honoured in the breach than the observance; that if, like Ananias and Sapphira, every one had got according to their deserts, "the feet of the young men" would have been cumbered with much carrying; how a simple, refreshing act like the washing of the feet, made necessary by the wearing of sandals in desert regions, is described in Gen. xviii. 4—"Let a little water, I pray you, be fetched, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree," and one may trace this simple and necessary act from Gen. xviii. 4, to 1 Tim. v. 10, and note how it became a rite.

And so, in the Scriptures, and in religious literature, endless references to feet may be found. God's pair are described as "awful feet." Not a very pleasant prospect of gathering round them! Is it? Of Christ's we are told—"In His Feet and Hands are wound-prints"; that he has "Sacret Feet"; "Paschal Victim's Feet"; "All glorious feet," etc. As for the Holy Ghost, we have not so much as heard whether he has any feet or no. (Acts xix. 2).

To come to earth. Humanity is credited with having "wandering and weary feet," and is well advised, in Jer. ii. 25, to "withhold thy foot from being unshod, and thy throat from thirst!"

At our weekday school, secular literature left some "footprints" on the grey matter of our little brain—a more enduring medium than the "sands of time!"

As boys, we were obsessed by Tom Hood's poems. What an interesting, serio-comic tale "Mary's Ghost" tells "Young William," her earthly lover; how her body, like her eternal peace is broken into pieces; that it is futile weeping upon her grave:—

To think that there I be;  
They have not left an atom there  
Of my anatomy.

Where parts of her body are to be found she informs him:—

As for my feet, my little feet,  
You used to call so pretty,  
There's one I know in Bedford Row  
The other's in the city. etc.

And in conclusion, although her heart is in the hands of another, she assures him of her fidelity:—

The cock it crows; I must be gone;  
Dear William, we must part,  
But I'll be yours in death, although  
Sir Astley has my heart.

And who can forget Sir John Suckling's "Ballad Upon a Wedding," particularly his description of the bride?:—

Her feet, beneath her petticoat,  
Like little mice, stole in and out,  
As if they feared the light.  
But O! she dances such a way!  
No sun upon an Easter day  
Is half so fine a sight.

And so one might ramble through the world of literature, picking up *considered* trifles. The quaint phrases, uses, and the strange customs relating to "feet" would fill a volume of considerable size. For instance, take the throwing of the old shoe after a bride for luck. The origin of this custom is Jewish. The bridegroom struck the bride with his shoe to demonstrate his supremacy and his wife's subjection. In the symbolism of the Jews the shoe played an important part, e.g., "Over Edom will I cast out my shoe" (Ps. lx. 8) illustrates the lordship assumed over Edom.

But, "something too much of this!" To hark-back, for a moment, to our starting point—adversity, "affliction's sons are brothers in distress." Tribal attacks, illness and accidents, in a primitive state of society, begat a feeling of brotherhood. But their bond of union was hatred. A bond of love was undreamt of, and we are yet as incapable as they were, despite our great ethical ideals, of a unity begotten of universal love. Our vision is still clouded by commercial dust. Many of us comprehend that our life, and the realization of its greatest possibilities, is bound up with that of the whole human race, that our strength is determined by the weakest link in the human chain. And some of us endeavour to minister unto the feet of the lame and the eyes of the blind.

GEORGE WALLACE

## "Whose War is This?"

God heard the embattled nations strive and shout  
"Gott strafe England!"—"God Save the King,"  
"God this, God that, and God the other thing!"  
"Good God," said God, "I've got my work cut out!"  
Sir John Squire

SOON after Mr. Chamberlain had declared war on Germany, the Archbishop of Canterbury gave us God's O.K. for the war, the Indian Princes promised us Moslem, Hindu, Buddhist, Brahmin and Parsee help, and we were going to "smash Hitlerism" (together with the aid of our Army, Navy and Air Force). The Prussianism, which we had failed to smash by means of a four years' war, was resurrected as "Hitlerism," which was spreading over Central Europe, and which was going to be smashed by means of a three years' war.

When the various churches that had said that there would be no war were proved wrong, I wished that they would shut up shop "for the duration," like

the *British Journal of Astrology*, which has had to close down "owing to the uncertainty of the immediate future"! But no, our churches intend to profiteer out of the sacrifices and sufferings of others, for the strange phenomena brought out in wartime can so easily be dubbed "Acts of God," and His prestige thereby enlarged. The busybodies are occupied in organizing special days of mass prayer, and "noon watches," when everybody says a short prayer for the soldiers as both hands of the clock point to twelve, and the soldiers are expected to stop the war for a moment and receive the prayers. (Or does God receive them? I may be wrong about the way it is supposed to work, and even if it were explained to me I doubt if I could believe it).

But the churches may be called upon to play a far more important rôle, for there are plans for a "Holy War against Bolshevism." Won't our meek and mild church folk enjoy themselves in an orgy of fighting "Bolshevics"!—and that includes us Freethinkers, I am afraid, because the word "Bolshevik" is made by certain people to cover a multitude of enemies. I am truly sorry for those Freethinkers who are opposed to Communism, and for the Dean of Canterbury who likes it; I don't know what they will do in the circumstances, and I am afraid I don't know what to advise them.

The way in which this possibility has been brought about is like this. The U.S.S.R. by her actions was able to split the Anti-Comintern Pact into its component parts. But a new one is now being organized in Paris, New York and London with expert advice (leavened with a little blackmail) from Mussolini and that "gallant Christian Gentleman," General Franco. The supposed object of the First Anti-Comintern Pact was, as its name suggests, to fight Communism, and to attack Soviet Russia; but it did many other things besides planning this; the destruction of Liberal Spain is but one example. So with this new "line-up," the semblance of attacking Communism only is being carried out in Paris, where M. Daladier has banned the French Communist Party and its Press, and in New York, where Congressman Martin Dies is staging a drive against the American Communists, while from London is being organized a press campaign to try to make out that "Chamberlain, Churchill and Anthony Eden . . . entirely attack Hitler, and no mention is made of the real enemy—Enemy No. 1, viz., Russia" (as Lady Dunally recently wrote). Following a report in the *Evening Standard* of October 12, 1939, that it is suggested that we should "switch the war," various kites have been flown in the provincial and weekly papers.

The Diplomatic Correspondent of the Welsh paper, *Y Cymro*, states.—

There is a danger that any Government likely to arise in Germany will be some form of revolutionary anarchy with which we can have no truck.

If that happens, it seems likely that French and British soldiers will have to walk in. I see only one hope, namely, for the old military families to re-grasp the reins and for us to help them create peace and order. (Translation).

The *Belfast Telegraph* sheds more light on this new "line-up":—

Were it not for the present insanity of Hitlerism, a union of France, Germany and Britain against the forces of Bolshevism and Communism would represent a more natural alliance.

But is this "line-up" really so new? The old policy of "appeasement"—our Government's building up of Fascism as a bastion against Communism—comes out only too plainly in this extract from the *Leeds Mercury*:—

We must not fight to crush Germany but to strengthen it against Stalin and Molotov. Hitler is mistaken if he thinks that we will look to him, after all that has happened, to be our sentinel against Bolshevism. We want an honest and trusty one. . . .

One, no doubt, who is an even stronger Fascist than Hitler, so that he may be able to stand up to Stalin and Molotov, and not crumble as Hitler and Ribbentrop did.

And our Mr. Duff Cooper chimes in tactlessly from the U.S.A. that the monarchy should be restored; (wasn't one of the reasons why America was dragged in last time to get rid of the Kaiser?). This has precipitated a row between the Hapsburgs and the Wittelsbachs, who both claim that they should rule over the proposed Catholic German Empire—but that may be rather beside the point at the moment.

In the U.S.A. the attack on the Communists precludes an attack on Mr. Roosevelt's New Deal. The suppression and persecution of the strong Communist Party in France and the moves in Britain are preparatory to a complete change in the Allies' war aim of "smashing Hitlerism." Even this war aim betrays the future, for our Government is not out to "smash Fascism," nor even to "smash Nazism." Instructions, have been sent to Government propagandists to attack Hitler, Goebbels and Hess, but to protect General Göring; it cannot be that as a consequence of attacking Fascism indiscriminately the General (because of his size), would be hit more frequently than the others, and as gentlemen we just could not do an unsporting thing like that; (besides, some of the shots might hit Mussolini, Franco or the Celestial Mikado). The General and some other Prussians are being carefully groomed for possible future use.

To quote from an editorial in the *Weekly Review* of October 19, 1939, which is run by that violent Catholic, Hilaire Belloc:—

Henceforward our battle—and the battle of Europe—is against Moscow employing the Prussian weapon as well as her own.

Another writer in the same paper has a long story, full of Russian, Afghan and Indian names, which tries to make out that Soviet Russia is going to attack India. This was all part of a plan to frighten the Indian National Congress into piping down about freedom in India; the Congress Leaders have been asking to know why, if Britain was fighting (to use our Premier's words), "against brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression and persecution," they shouldn't have a little freedom from this sort of thing in India. The Government felt embarrassed, and tried to frighten the Indians with the Red Bogey. How would the various religious sects of India fare under the Atheist Soviet Dictatorship? But the Indians did not mind, and began to ask some even more embarrassing questions as to whether Britain had contemplated "switching the war" against Russia.

That this plan did not have the desired effect does not in any way alter the fact that, as history has clearly shown, the church people so easily link up with reactionary politicians to crusade against social progress and freedom. The editor of the *Catholic Herald* makes it clearer in defining the "two paramount purposes" of Catholics in this war as:—

(a) resistance to the godless, Asiatic and purely destructive Soviet menace.

(b) the re-growth in Europe of Faith in Almighty God and the common action in accordance with His Will, as manifested in the traditions and history of Europe and in man's enlightened conscience.

So now we know.

KESTER DRYDEN



## As Others See Us

To learn the attitude of our Freethought brethren in England, one looks to the observations of Mr. Chapman Cohen, Editor of the London *Freethinker* and President of the National Secular Society. His article of September 10, headed "Special," and signed by him in both these capacities is convincing on that point. With allusion to Hitler and his henchmen, who have gained control of the German people, as "the gang of criminally-minded sexual perverts and sadistic monstrosities who began their career by burning their own parliament house in order to fix the crime on others," he insists "there can be no lasting peace between such monsters and decent-minded men and women, and no further hope of entering into peaceful relations or negotiations with them should be entertained. . . . We do not talk of appeasing confirmed criminals." And then, like a twentieth-century Thomas Paine, he reflects: "But however severe the suffering and however great the social deterioration that accompanies all wars, the destruction of human values that would follow life in a world dominated by German Fascism would be incalculably greater." Dropping back twenty-five years, Mr. Cohen resumes: "At the outset of the war of 1914, I said that the great thing was to think how we might live peacefully with Germans when the war was over. Killing them was comparatively an easy thing. I repeat this sentiment now, and I feel that in doing so I am expressing the feelings of British Freethinkers."

The people and Government of England, the King and his Lords and Commons, appeal to the people of Germany against their war-making rulers by dropping a profusion of leaflets from airplanes over their cities—eighteen million copies of them, at last reports. Mr. Cohen's "Special," done into German, reprinted and distributed as above, might be welcomed by the Freethinkers of the Reich, as it probably expresses their feelings also. Freedom of thought advances the ideal of Daniel Webster, which was liberty and union, now and forever, one and inseparable.

From the New York *Truthseeker*

## Correspondence

### THE CHRISTIAN TREASURE

TO THE EDITOR OF THE "FREETHINKER"

SIR,—In "Acid Drops" you speak of Hitler demanding half the precious metals owned by the Catholic Church, and in particular a "gift" of the gold. This puts me in mind of the story copied from *The Crisis*, Edited by Robert Owen, and Robert Dale Owen, dated January 26, 1833:—

#### NAPOLÉON AND THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Napoleon having entered one of the cities of Italy, the church-wardens recommended to him the reliques of their church. "Sire, will you deign to take our Apostles under your protection?" "Your Apostles! are they of wood?" "No, Sire." "Of what are they then?" "Of silver, sire—of solid silver!" "Solid silver," replied Napoleon, quickly. "Yes, I shall help them to fulfil their mission—it has been ordained that they should go throughout the world—and they shall." Having said so, the Emperor sent the Twelve Apostles to the mint at Paris.

From a new reader—but an old Freethinker.

J.B.

### A WORD OF THANKS

SIR,—Enclosed please find weekly remittance to the Jubilee Fund.

May I take this opportunity of thanking Mr. Chapman Cohen, and all with whom I have had the privilege of contacting on the *Freethinker*, for the truly "Christian"

kindness that has repeatedly been extended to me, despite the undoubted uncouthness of my actions at times—and to express the sincere wish that 1940 will bring success within sight of all.

You will no doubt remember that day, thirteen months ago, when—like Saul of Tarsus—an ignoramus barged into your office and attempted to zealously annihilate your case. Like Saul—time has wrought changes in him, and to-day it is hard to show appreciation for the lessons received during the past year.

The future is supposed to be in the lap of the gods, but personally I prefer Henley: "I am the Master of my Fate." That mistakes have been made, and will again in the future, is not denied, but—although adversity tries us, it also teaches, and who knows?—the jigsaw puzzle may be solved and the perfect plan materialize.

I will not close with the hypocritical greetings of the season, but sincerely quote Robert Service:—

Carry on. Carry on  
Let the world be the better for you.

"ISHMAELITE"

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